

Easter V A May 14, 2017

Acts 7: 55-60; Psalm 31: 1-5, 15-16; I Peter 2: 2-10; John 14: 1-14

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In the morning's epistle from First Peter comes this directive: "*Be like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation...*" LONG for the spiritual milk says St. Peter. This is my second Motherless Mother's Day wherein I find myself missing her more now than the initial parting. Although my mother and I frequently had extreme drama over our shared journey, her last three years after she moved from Tennessee to be with us in Connecticut, made me appreciate her lifelong spiritual teachings. There was healing: that if there were something I was hanging on to, a memory, a resentment, it was encumbering me, not Mother-even something that used to prove me right, it was no longer a living reality but actually a dead one, suffocation or poison or a

**jagged scar. I was missing the spiritual milk all the time-available-
that she longed to give and for which I unconsciously longed. My
mother was a veritable, and appreciated Biblical Concordance,
impressing on Tom and me, her five grandchildren, and eight great-
grandchildren, the centrality of Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth,
and the Life.**

**Who are the “mothers” in your life? Images break forth. From
whom have you received “mothering”? Other, perhaps surprising
images surface. But, at root, it’s what the Lord God demonstrates to
us: “I want to be in my children’s lives with love; this is the
unconditional “Mothering” dimension of God for which our hungry
hearts long.**

**Mother’s Day can evoke conflicting images: appreciation and
disappointment; blame and regret; sadness and joy. Moods swing:
the no-longer-living are idealized; the still-living are trivialized; and
authenticity probably lies somewhere in between. Given the
vicissitudes of life, some of us might never know our biological
mother’s identity. Some of us never find that mother; perhaps that**

mother never finds us. Yet, in a wondrous spiritual way, there can be surrogate mothers who have re-birthed and nurtured us with “the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it we grow into salvation.” And that is God’s Miraculous Maternal Delivery System.

What do you hold dear to the very core of your being, that to deny it would make your life totally meaningless? The Acts of the Apostles illuminates the story of Stephen, embodying his growth from spiritual milk into salvation, reminding us practitioners of private, safe and polite religion that once there were Christians who did not long for the material nor status quo but quite joyfully parted with even life itself for the faith. Deacon Stephen, the first martyr of the Church, had incurred the murderous wrath of the fledgling Christian community’s mortal opponents, the Council of Jerusalem, with a fiery speech outlining Israel’s spiritually rebellious history. As the fatal stones rained, Stephen, consumed with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and an image of Jesus standing at God’s right hand; then St. Stephen prays as Jesus did,

for God to receive his spirit and for the Father to forgive those who executed him. A profound image indeed.

In today's Gospel of John, Jesus promises, "Let not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a place for you...I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also." Isn't that what we all long for—our place in God's kingdom? St. Thomas longed to know where Jesus was leading—"Lord we do not know [the place] where you are going and asked, "How can we know the way?"

Having been crucified, resurrected, and soon to ascend, Jesus reveals the gold standard value with which he holds his disciples, then and now. Undergirded with unconditional love and nurturing spiritual milk, Jesus directs them, "*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*" Jesus is the Way because he is the Truth, that is, the full revelation of God, and the Life because God's Life resides in him.

In reality the only purpose of the spiritual life for you and me is seeing the world as God sees it and becoming our True Self, who, like Jesus, spiritually bends to become the miracle the world awaits.

In this spiritually-longing world, how we respond, whether we

contract, close ourselves off, “cover our ears” like those who stoned Stephen, or expand and open ourselves to God’s spiritual milk?

How do we develop a longing “*for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation...*”?

Yes, times are changing...relentlessly, inevitably, inventively, but in the shift, they set into bright relief that which does not change: “Let not your heart be troubled...I go to prepare a place for you...” This promise points beyond our surface planes of action and reaction to a deeper image of the Shepherd guardian of our souls. Jesus’ promise not only outlines eternal life, everlasting life, a FUTURE place we’ll go, but also is a PRESENT place in the here-and-now. To follow the Way, the Truth and the Life is to nurture Jesus’ mission, making the coming of God’s Kingdom an actual reality.

What joys are ours when we pursue our innate longing for the spiritual milk offered by God. We become living edifices that house our Lord, that give us the power to stand strong for righteousness and truth, to be as St. Peter says, “*a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that we may proclaim the mighty acts of*

God who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.” To proclaim and embody these mighty acts, you and I can pursue that longing “for the pure, spiritual milk” in body, spirit and mind. In body we come to church to satisfy our longing (conscious or unconscious) for the community to direct us toward right relationships with God, neighbor and self. In spirit, we can pray for God and the Holy Spirit to instill in us the longing “for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation....” With our minds we can imagine the longing expressed by fellow parishioner Jayleigh Lewis in her highest prize-winning paper at Hartford Seminary’s graduation this past Friday, QUOTE “...to engage the images, we engage one another. We ask. What do YOU see? What do YOU hear? What do YOU understand? Who is the Jesus that your perceptions uniquely shape a body for and call into this three-dimensional, historical realm? No image is superior to any other. To have a hope of understanding the reality (of Jesus) they represent, we need all of them. We need all of us.” End Quote.

Come my Way, my Truth, my Life. Amen.

