

A Sermon by the Rev. Deacon Cecily Sawyer Harmon, LCSW

St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Newark, DE 19711

The Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 21, 2017 Year A

Acts 17:22-31; Psalm 66:7-18; 1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be

Acceptable to you Lord Christ my rock and my redeemer.

In this morning's Gospel Jesus is preparing his disciples for his Departure because he knows he must return to his Father. He has been with them for 40 days, and they have become comforted and at peace with his presence among them. I wonder and do you wonder how willing were they to hear and accept this pronouncement?

We heard in last week's Gospel Thomas tell the Lord, "we don't know where you are going". How can we know the way.

How many of us have had that same feeling of being confused, stuck, and not knowing which way to turn or up from down.

I imagine the disciples might have been terrified thinking that they too would encounter persecution, rejection and even death.

Jesus lovingly reassures them his friends, his buddies, his amigos that when he goes to the Father he will not and would not ever abandon them. God will give them another The Advocate to be with them forever. The Paraclete, Spirit of Truth, Ruok the Holy Spirit.

He shares with his disciples the The Advocate is for the community of faith and will not be understood by the world who cannot obey his commandments. Having given his disciples the Commandment to love one another as Jesus himself had love them.

He commanded them to be obedient to this Commandment if they loved him. How easy or difficult is it for us to be loyal, honest, submissive, dutiful, ready to obey, respectful to a person or a cause. All of these words define obedience.

Considering our society today we see individuals and groups of people being obedient to the wrong causes, and individuals. Too

many of our citizen are without adequate health coverage, there has been an increase of racial and ethnic intolerance. Innocent people have been deported and separated from their families.

The obedience that our Lord spoke of was to love, yes this four letter word that holds a great deal of significances and power. Why is this four letter word so powerful our Lord made it so by telling his disciples that he lives in his Father and the disciples live in him and he lives in the disciples. They have only to do one thing obey his commandments.

To Love, Love, Love. How easy or difficult is it to love another someone you don't know, someone you don't life or respect. Let's be truthful here it's pretty darn difficult.

Christ suffered for the sins for all the righteous and unrighteous alike in order to bring us to God. The redemptive suffering of Christ serves for all humanity even those who hadn't had the opportunity to learn God's truth.

It is through baptism we are all united with Christ. The Advocate dwells in everyone who loves Jesus and honors his commandments.

As his children we call upon and pray to our Father for all sorts of needs and wants. The list can be for very serious conditions of health, obtaining and securing employment, to passing your final exams. I would like to share with you my journey this week in preparing today's sermon. I know for certain that the Holy Spirit she was with me.

On Monday afternoon I had written and typed most of my sermon, a first to have started so early needless to say I was quite proud of myself. By Tuesday afternoon when I went to start my computer to finish my sermon nothing happened. After several calls to Verizon and following instructions it became horrible clear my computer had died with my sermon inside.

I immediately called Joy Lynam and asked her if she would help me to decide on what type of laptop to purchase, but that was

not going to help me for Sunday. My next step was to let Father Paul know what happened and see if he could be on standby to preach today.

Well here I am.

Fortunately I had not destroyed my hand written notes and my former Administrative Associate agreed to type what I had written, but I still had to finish the sermon. What was I going to share.

On Thursday morning my first patient came for her session. I have her permission to share our spiritual time together. Her father passed away last year and the family of four daughters, mother and grandchildren are all going through the journey in their way

My client a religious and spiritual person shared how she and her Father spent his final hours. She said he spoke of seeing angels and family members that were waiting for him. This past weekend during a family gathering her niece said this seat is for PopPop. All the other family members looked at her (what is she talking about).

My client knew that her father was there with them. A few days

later the family dog was looking at her father's chair and barking in a manner that my client states that he was acknowledging someone was there.

I don't recall how the opportunity came, but I took out these two publications to share with her. She looked them over and after reading my story with tears in her eyes she told me for the first time that her father had been a patient at Fox Chase and it was there after many other hospital visits that he was first diagnosed. She looked up and said I know my Dad is here right now with us.

The Holy Spirit was with us this morning our love for one another through our baptism in his name allowed us to feel his presence and know that the Holy Spirit was with us to share this moment of the Lords grace.

Amen.