

Samaritan Woman - 26 May 2019

Tone 4

Any fioretti needs a little bit of light

“I am the Light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (Jn 8, 12).

This was the beginning of the gospel reading on Thursday. The same day that we had no power at the Mission for the entire morning all over the neighbourhood because a squirrel chewed on an electrical cable at Dundas and Broadview causing a fire in the intersection. As an effect of that people had no breakfast, except those who ate between 5 and 6, nor any coffee shop was open for many hours. It looked like a serious crisis, with fire trucks making noise continuously, Angela showing us pictures with the electrical pole in flames, with people running out of the building to look for light, with the washroom being locked because it could not be used in the darkness, and so on. And on top of that, it was a cloudy morning, so we didn't have enough daylight in the room in order for us to be able to read at the table without using a candle. What was left behind was an empty church where darkness was getting to feel comfortable paralyzing any movement of those who stayed.

With the wave of people going out Peter was coming in. From over the bridges, he is leaping all the way because of his bad knee. It takes him a long time to get to us, so the news of the crisis did not get to him. He was not concerned about the lack of coffee because he drinks his old cold tea that he carries with him. We sat together at the table in semi-darkness and we read together the gospel of the day by the light of a candle. “I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life...”

After he read the gospel I asked Peter to tell me what it meant for him. He spoke about how the thoughts of man mean nothing, only God judges and sees. How we need to look in our life for His will, to be patient and to trust Him and not our own will. How we don't see the real picture with our weak mind, it is God who sees and does it all. How we are stubborn and we want to go our way, but at the end we cannot witness our own life. How we cannot and should not judge each other and ourselves, but rather look for God's understanding in our life. On Thursday Peter witnessed the presence of light in our lives, while we were panicking at the illusion of darkness when a squirrel cut the power away from us for a few hours.

PN

The week of mid-Pentecost speaks to us about the living water and the Spirit.

“In the last day, the great day of the feast Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirsts, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believe on me, as the scripture had said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of the living water. But this he spoke of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive... (from gospel of mid – Pentecost, John7, 14-30)

Troparion of mid -Pentecost

When the Paschal Feast is half completed, quench my thirsty soul with the waters of devotion; for You, O Savior, have announced to all: Let all who are thirsty come to Me and drink. O Christ our God, Source of our life, glory be to You!

Kontakion of Sun. of the Samaritan Woman

Plagal of the Fourth Tone

The Samaritan Woman, having come to the well in faith, beheld You, the Water of Wisdom from which she drank plentifully and inherited the Heavenly Kingdom as one who is blessed forever.

Paralytic - 19 May 2019

Tone 3

About last week

Ben is a lonely, lonely soul. I could not figure how and why he smiles so much. I just got a clue this week. On Wednesday he resembled the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading from Isaiah - when he met Philip - (Acts 8: 26-

40) *about the coming of Christ and about his passion. Being a lonely, lonely soul, the same Wednesday in the morning Ben read from Matthew about Jesus. His betrayal, his passion and his resurrection. He reads "his Bible" every day. Then I realised, he was not actually lonely at all.*

Who we really are? Sometimes it feels like we would rather not want to find out. Because of fear of what we can see inside of us. Familiarity with ourselves and with others is one of the worst enemies we have. Somebody was telling me this week about how he can tell about a person's heart just by looking at the appearances (I personally find this belief scary). Yes, not many people would argue with that. We resemble at times an open book, or rather, as people may say these days, an unlocked cellphone. But do we really know, or how much do we really know from within ourselves or from others? When we judge ourselves or we judge others we don't see beyond our struggles, vulnerabilities, weakness and so on. We don't see much beyond of a lonely heart.

But this is not the truth of our identity. We know who we are if we listen to the Word of God and if we touch his hand like Thomas, to feel the sign of the nails and to hold it like Adam in hades when Christ takes him out (the resurrection icon). Old Adam was unworthy of God's love, being locked in hades, but he becomes worthy of His resurrection when he takes the hand of Christ who is reaching out to him. This is the first act of man's righteousness. When the old Adam becomes new. When in his unworthiness he receives God and follows him out of hades. How much faith was required from Adam, being buried in hades and within himself, to recognize the love of God and to act on it. All of it. But this is what the faith is for, to feel being locked in hades or buried within yourself, but to see that through the light of the resurrection. And to walk on it. The first act of righteousness of man, who, being unworthy, recognizes the true love and acts on it. This is a real witness today. And we are blessed within our community to see that so often. Wounded people whose scars we can touch, and then follow because they did not reject the hand who pulled them out of darkness but became chosen vessels who walk in the streets of our city within the light of the resurrection. Christ is Risen!

PN

From a sermon

The mercy of the Lord is first tasted in our heart. The sweetness we taste is the word of God who touches the human heart, to which he grants the words of prayer. It is the Holy Spirit who initiates the prayer, through the Word of God, and who is incarnate in our being, so we can behold and receive the love of God the Father. This is the movement that brings us back and reconciles us with each other. ... Prayer takes us out of despair and shows us the real hope, it is the light of those who experience losses, because it reunites them within the kingdom of heaven; where there is sorrow, it reveals you the joy of truth, when reality around you appears crippled and with no desire for beauty. Sometimes prayer is the only thing we have. It eases the busyness of our mind through silence and gives us words when we are silenced through violence. It angers the fear from us so it can become again a good pleasure in the Lord. Like a waterless land that does not dry out, but longing for water, remembers the spring from within.

"God grants prayer to those who pray."

PN

12 May 2019

Today we have the memorial service for **Jean Vanier**

Jean was a good friend of Pascal Pingault, founder of Pain de Vie community. The mission to this day is associated with Pain de Vie. In 2008 Jean came to visit St John's mission in Toronto and broke the bread with our community. It would be the last time Jean would travel to see us in Toronto. We can continue to walk hand and hand learning from the poor what it means to be human.

Words from Jean Vanier's books:

about hope...

The wounded heart is hidden, revealing itself through fear, lack of confidence, depression, violence, fantasies and withdrawal from reality. Above all, it is manifested by a broken image of self, a profound guilt and a refusal of life...

In the heart of each of us there is division, there is fear, there is fragility; there is a defense system which protects our vulnerability, there is flight from pain..

The experience of God's love, for those who are able to discover themselves (either directly, or through an intermediary) as truly children of the Father, will be able more readily to drop their barriers which have been built around their vulnerable hearts, and they will experience a certain wholeness.

To live an experience of being forgiven, washed in the living waters which springeth forth from the heart of God, will little by little, erase the feeling of guilt which is often so tenacious. When we discover we are loved by the Father, we can begin to trust ourselves. This experience gives hope.

...the way we are created

This book (Man and woman, God made them) is to thank God for having created us man and woman. Each one, alone, is fragile and incomplete, but through an authentic love which is communion and gift, a unity is given which draws us from our loneliness and makes us enter the heart of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

When a man and a woman truly love each other whether it be through marriage or in celibacy and community life, there is nothing more beautiful. It is the gift of God to humanity. Their love is the root of the body which is the community. It is the power of unity which will inspire all other unities: it is the power of healing which will inspire all other healings. It is fruitful with a spiritual fruitfulness.

about growth in community...

Each member of a community who grows in love and wisdom helps the growth of the whole community. Each person who refuses to grow, or is afraid to go forward, inhibits the community's growth. All the members of the community are responsible for their own growth and that of the community as a whole. Human growth is to do with integrating our capacity for action with our own heart. Too often, action springs from fear of relationships, of our own vulnerability, or of love; it comes from fear of dependence, of sexuality and of our own deep and hidden self. Action is too often a flight or a desire to prove something. When we are at peace, when we have accepted our own deep wounds and weaknesses, when we are in touch with our own heart and capacity for tenderness, then actions flow from our true selves, and become a source of growth.

True growth comes as members of the community integrate into their hearts and minds the vision and spirit of the community. In that way they choose community as it is and become responsible for it. When people have not integrated the vision into themselves they tend to imitate others or they are just wanting a place where they can belong. This is dangerous and can prevent growth to wholeness.

05 May 2019

Priest Musing

Christ is Risen!

“The holy women hastened after you with sweet spices. The one whom they sought with tears as a mortal, they worshipped with joy as the living God, and they proclaimed the mystical Passover, O Christ, to your disciples”.

How deep does the joy of the Resurrection go down in our heart? This week, a woman was asking me for how long we celebrate Pascha in church. - For now and forever and ever. - Because she would like to come too, to celebrate and rejoice. “Because for me, she said, it is hard to find joy in anything. You know, when I was young, in the country where I grew up they put a lot of bricks in me, they cemented my soul. You know how it is. And then you don't feel anything afterwards. No joy.”

From the past, from the present, or from the future (as we can watch from afar), we carry bricks with us. If we don't, than we see it around us. A generalised lack of attention towards the joy that comes from the tomb of Christ. An attention deficit disorder for the heart of our salvation, for the source of regeneration for the entire creation - Christ's Resurrection - in whom it is established. Someone was describing well this type of amnesia, like a blanket of fog, that covers the whole nation.

Real sorrow that we have in our heart though, is different than the bricks we carry or the fog that blurs our vision. Somebody who came back from a trip from a poor exotic country shared with me his impression after

visiting a community of the poorest of the poor, as he described it. A poor community that lives in houses built on water, who eat only fish (if they can catch any) and rice (if any grows at all). But he said he was shocked to see with how much love and how much peace they greet guests but also treat each other. Having real joy, their priest said, they also have a deep sorrow they carry in their hearts.

The women came with tears and spices and their sorrow turned into joy when they worshiped the living God. The joy of the Resurrection springs forth from the bottom of a sorrowful heart.

There is real sorrow in our heart, there is real sorrow around us, but that's what meets the Resurrection of Christ. We cannot receive the joy of the resurrection but within the honesty of our heart. Which is for now sorrowful, until God will grant us to partake of Him fully "in the day that has no evening in his Kingdom". So for now, to receive the real joy, we need to go deeper within the sorrow we bear. Not to stay on the surface, but to dare to go and see deeper, because that's the place where the doubt has no power, being overtaken by joy.

The Voice of St John's

Anna will forgive me if I share what she told me this week. She noticed our community being different. She also noticed us changing and being different. Not better human beings, but different in the way we participate in the work of God. She thinks God is not happy with the way things go in church, and He is changing things. Always for the better. (Until he brings us to perfection I would say). That's how she sees even the big events that took place recently around the world (she mentioned Notre Dame in Paris and massacre in Sri Lanka). New work lays ahead of us. And this, she thinks, will liberate us. And to make me understand, she also named a few people from our community. My reply was that yes, we are happy and we like to participate in doing different things. She said no, it is not about that. It is about being needed.

By God, to work with Him; on what seems to be the real work. This, for me and for our community, sounds like really good news.

"The Lord slayeth and engendereth life, He bringeth down to hades and bringeth up again" - From the prayer of Hannah

Important for today

Today, after the agape meal, please take 15 minutes more to practice singing together.

The 9th ode of the resurrection canon. The overall desire is for us to reflect together on what we are looking for when we come to church. And how we can live that for the better. This also affects the way we pray, eat, and share time or work together. Singing is the first attempt. So, please bring your voices, but also your thoughts on what the gathering could look like.

As an adagio, we'll also try to involve the children in singing this Sunday. So they will be eating and spending time with us today. And why not get them involved in the clean up as well ?