

## Sixth Sunday of Easter

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

When I was a college Chaplain, I pondered with many students who were finally able to practice critical thinking--- make sure we put the emphasis on critical.

William Willimon worded it this way, "Folks criticize the Christian faith as being simplistic, pre-scientific and superstitious and then they rush to the strange consolation of astrology, transcendental meditations, ESP or happy hearted Humanism."

I add that many young folks who don't fit in are attracted to witchcraft. The coven, the group, is very supportive.

You and I have our own faith issues to manage. Each of us received the Spirit, yet each of us have minds and we use reason. We know revelation and we know reason.

One of the many powers and principalities that revelations and reason must deal with is the incredible need to belong.

Back in the day, Tiananmen Square was considered the center of the universe for China. Punishment for crimes was moving the criminal a prescribed distance from The Square. The worse the crime, the more distance from The Square. For those moved from The Square, those who no longer belonged close to the center, it was common for them to sink into a deep and deadly depression.

Our natural sense to belong may overcome our ability to see and think clearly.

The disciples needed Jesus to hold them together. After the death of Jesus, the disciples scattered and when they gathered again the living presence of God was with them. Soon, each disciple was able to go into the world.

We all know what it feels like to risk belonging or risk not being true to ourselves. In John's Gospel, we hear Jesus tell us that the spirit of truth is given to us, and yet I will continue to sense a tension between truth and belonging.

I have faith in the living presence of God as revealed in the Old and New Testaments and the continuing history of mankind. The footprint of the eternal presence of compassion and justice is unmistakable. Yet my small ability to reason and think is always active.

There was a time when science scoffed at religion, scoffed at revelation. Today, the scientific community is well aware of revelation and sees revelation as active in the world. So, we have revelation and reason. We have the awareness of truth and the need to belong.

I think all four of these are very real for us. When we come here, we are present with revelation, reason, truth and fellowship. Our worship is a bit biased toward the revealed presence of the living God.

Like the disciples, we gather with Jesus for nourishment; we gather with each other and we return to our world as living members of the body of Christ.

I'll bet we hedge on the truth. I'll bet we'll fall short of loving God and our neighbor. I'll bet we will sense the tension between faith and reason. And when this happens, it is the

sign that we are on the path of abundant life. Perhaps there are those who have no tensions in their lives, but this is no life for us. It is our call, our purpose to be in the tension.

We are like Paul. We too move among the cults and religions of Charlotte. Our task is not to change the other. Our call is to express our understanding as best we can. We Episcopalians believe in the ongoing revelation of the living presence of God. Our emphasis will always be two-fold: love God, that is maintain our relationship with compassion and justice, and second, love our neighbors. We will spend time and energy and money loving compassion and caring for others. We will not waste time protecting a nation of God from the infidels.

What do you believe? Answer: "I believe in the continuing revelation of the eternal presence of the living God." But just as important, I continue my relationship with compassion and justice and caring of others. That's my story and I'm sticking to it!

Soon we will go in peace to love and serve the Lord. The testing will begin as soon as we get on Central Avenue. Go with God. Amen.

Rev. Will Hinson  
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