

John 13:31-35
May 15, 2022

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

So, today is the Fifth Sunday of Easter. We have two more to go. Easter is a 7 week celebration, but everyone is getting a little tired of Easter, right? I mean, even the Easter lilies are having a hard time trumpeting the good news.

After five weeks, Easter has gotten, dare I say, a little boring. Yes. We know. Christ is risen. It's become a challenge get excited anymore. We've lost our enthusiasm. But, that's ok, because the Easter Season is actually about getting us ready for Pentecost, the sending of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church.

So, during the Season of Easter, our readings focus on Jesus preparing the disciples for his departure, the arrival of the Holy Spirit, and the handing over of his ministry to us. Easter is a time of transition, from one way of being to another. From this is how God works to now you go live it in the world, because I'm heading back to Heaven

For 40 days after the resurrection, Jesus hung out with his disciples. He walked with them and he talked with them and told them they are his own, but he also made it clear – "I'm leaving and where I am going, you cannot come." You have to stay here. This is a forewarning of Jesus' ascension back to Heaven.

Jesus is going back to Heaven, and the disciples have to stay here. They have work to do here – to love one another and thereby proclaim the good news of God's reconciling love.

We have that same work to do here and now. We are the continuation of that work. So, our minds aren't set on Heaven and what Jesus is doing up there, our mind is set on the here and now, in the things that we do know, as we continue Jesus' earthly ministry of love, healing, and wholeness for all of creation.

We have work to do here. Jesus has work to do there. We have work to do here, until he returns again.

When I was a teenager, like 13-14, I would go to work for my uncle at his printing and binding shop – L&M Printing, you may have heard of it.

When my uncle needed extra help, I would go to the shop to earn some spending cash and also so that I wouldn't have to have someone keep an eye on me while I was home alone and my mom was at work at my uncle's shop.

Usually I would get sent off to the bindery to put publications together, which was much better than pulling weeds. The work was pretty mindless, but it paid. The only thing you had to be careful of was going the right way and grabbing in the correct order. If you messed that up, it was disaster, but once you got the hang of it, it was pretty easy. The hardest part was only pulling one sheet of paper at a time and not getting dizzy from walking around in circles.

The very first day I went to work for uncle I didn't want to leave my mom. I was a very shy kid and it took some effort to get me off with other people. I was one of those kids who cried on the first day of school all the way through my Freshmen year in college.

That first day of crossing over into a new reality always got me emotional, and it wasn't any different at my uncle's shop. I didn't want to go into the unknown, especially because I didn't know anyone. So I got a little emotional as I left my mom and entered into the new world of binding, but that's ok. Once I got into the rhythm I was fine and I even had fun and made new friends.

Once I got to work, I really didn't think much about what my mom was up to, mostly because I really had no idea what she was doing. As a kid I thought she just sat in the office, drank coffee, and ate snacks. Later I learned she was basically the receptionist, answering phones and typing things up. But, at that point all I knew was that she was there doing her thing and I was in the bindery doing mine, and it took both of us doing our own things to make the shop productive.

At lunch time we would all take a break and get together to eat. She had brought food for us, and we ate it along with the other workers. After lunch it was back to work. She in her spot and I in mine until the end of the day when she would come to get me and we would go home together.

In the Gospel reading for today, which actually takes place at the Last Supper, Jesus tells the disciples – Where I am going, you cannot come, which is actually twofold. I am heading to the cross to be crucified, which is not your place to be, and then later after the resurrection, I'm heading back to Heaven. I've got work to do there, and you have the work of loving one another here.

We have work to do here. Jesus has his work to do in Heaven, which is different from ours. His work is his work and our work is our work, and our work is to be done here and now, right where we are.

This is our place of “employment,” and Jesus is still our boss telling us what to do from HQ through the intercom, aka the Holy Spirit, who tells us to go out into the world and share God’s love with everyone we meet so that all the world will know who God truly is – loving and merciful, full of grace and compassion, with us and for us always. Our directive is - be the love with which you are loved.

In a way, it’s kind of like working at my uncle’s shop. My mom had her work to do in the office and I had my work to do in the bindery. We got together for lunch, and then it was back to our separate work until the end when we were gathered back together and taken home.

Jesus is our boss who has set us to task, to work in his kingdom here and now while he works in Heaven. He comes to meet us for lunch in Holy Communion, and picks up the phone whenever we call in prayer. Eventually he will come back to us and bring us to our new home, which will be here, our retirement home where there will be no more work for any of us to do, because everything will have been made complete.

But, until that time, we have our work to do here. We have good news to share. We have God’s love to live.

So, we are to care for others by sharing God’s unconditional and unending love in our words and in our actions. While Jesus does his work in Heaven, whatever that might be, we do his work here that he has sent us to do. I guess we’ll find out in the end what Jesus is up to. But, until that point, we focus on our own reality, our own here and now, including the people in our lives, remembering that we are on a mission from God to love one another, while also keeping in mind that no one is outside of God’s love, not even those who eat weird things.

Where Jesus is, we cannot go, because we are not Jesus and his job is not our job. Instead Jesus comes to us via the Holy Spirit and sends us to be his disciples here and now with our own work to do, to share the good news that Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Thanks be to God! Amen.