

Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year C
The Rev. Michelle P. Mooney
St. Mark's Episcopal Church | Milwaukee, WI
May 1, 2016

All of us here today this parish are in the midst of two important times.

The first is the living into the call of the Easter Season. A season that while it comes every year like clockwork so to speak, is still momentous each and every time we experience it.

The second is that we, as a parish, are entering into a new time with a new pastor that calls us to live into our life together in perhaps many new ways.

Today's Gospel tells us that "the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all I have said to you." This is a promise that is central to our calling as Christians. We are assured that, as we go out as Christians in the world, expanding by our actions, the kingdom of God on this earth, we will have this teacher, this mentor, this advocate to guide us.

To see God working and abiding with all who are in need, distress, suffering, or are ill, requires us to be open to these sad conditions and to be moved to put things more aright.

This doesn't mean that we have to go out and start a non-profit to battle some great injustice, or join the armed forces to fight in a battle, or start a major upheaval at your work place. You are called rather to be open and sensitive to the little as well as the big sins around you that reflect our fallen world.

It reminds me of how when I was walking down Downer yesterday, how many people seemed to have sad, hopeless, down turned visages as they simply walked along. I thought, how could I change just a small moment in their lives so that a little ray of decency and hope might shine in. Could I hug them to life? Could I, just by saying hello and smiling, bring a little respite in their apparent heaviness and perhaps isolation? I don't know. But I could certainly try, even if they thought I was a little "odd" for intruding into their lives. The Holy Spirit might certainly say, "Go for it!"

We are called as God's agents to be passionate about injustice, suffering, and all aspects of a fallen and sinful world as well as bringing creativity, joy, hope and reconciliation.

Now if you are like me, or really like historically most of God's chosen Biblical leaders, you may well say, "Wait. I am not smart enough, articulate enough, not educated enough, or have enough courage-to be one of God's agents! I'm just an ordinary sort that finds it hard enough to just get through the day, much less be a reformer, peace maker, leader of people or a bringer of joy and hope. Why me?"

Well, you know, God has an odd way of not accepting our excuses. And in the Easter Season especially, we are promised and reassured that the Holy Spirit will be with us every day to help us be one of God's agents in the world.

Sure it's not easy to go up against the culture and the powers that be at work, school, in our families or anywhere that injustice, rejection, hopelessness, and sin raises its head, but that is our call. This is why after Christ's resurrection, we are promised the help of the Holy Spirit to inform and fortify us for the challenge ahead. You can count on it. Take it to the bank. It's a done deal! The Gospels are clear on this.

Now the other important time we are in, as I mentioned when I started, is the inauguration of a new ministry with a new priest in this parish. Ian comes to us with new ideas and plans that will help us as a community to speak to the needs of the world. And he comes with new ideas that can help us be a better community among ourselves. He comes as a leader that will challenge us to be the best that we can be, as we listen and act on the new ministries that lie ahead. He will not do this for us—we will do it together—or very little will change.

But, I believe that there is a new spirit a foot in this parish.

I believe that many of us have a new confidence that we can build a new and better future for us as a parish and also speak to the needs of the community and world around us.

I believe that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can move forward to a new life together.

And finally I believe, if we are saved, it is only through God's resurrection grace, manifested in part through us, that will show God's desire to renew and restore creation. The resurrection is radically inclusive, offering new life to all, not just to some. We as God's agents and this parish, as one of God's sacred communities, is called to be part of expanding this new creation, known as the kingdom of God.

I am excited, and I pray that you are too!