

“WE ARE SATISFIED!”

A Sermon for the Commemoration of St Philip Institute of Liturgical Studies, Valparaiso University May 1, 2003

St John 14:8-14

Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it."

Each time that I gather around this table in preparation to leave this Liturgical Institute, I feel the way I imagine Philip felt at that other table, when Jesus prepared to leave the disciples to return to God. After these days of inspiring addresses, stimulating conversations, cherished comradery, and glorious worship, like Philip, I want to squeeze out just a little more before everything comes to an end. Give me just one more conversation with someone who understands what *paschal mystery* means. Just once more let me join my voice with people unafraid to sing a new hymn. Just give me one more shiver up my spine as the Spirit blows through an assembly that understands celebrating Word and Sacrament to be the center of its being and not an addendum. Just once more, and I will be satisfied.

Philip's request was a little bigger. Then again, Philip was attending the kind of institute that could get Jesus as the preacher at its closing Eucharist. "Lord," Philip says, "show us the Father and we will be satisfied." Philip wants to see God, to enter the holy of holies. Philip wants access to the hidden one, entree that no one else is given. Jesus' response both assures us that we have access to God and limits the kind of entree that we have.

Jesus says, "Have I been with you all this time and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." Our access to God, our relationship with God does not come from seeing God's hiddenness or by entering some heavenly holy of holies. Our most basic relationship with God is not confined to glimpses, when we step away from the places where day in and day out we live and move and have our being in order to step into something extraordinary.

Instead of admitting us to God's otherness, Jesus enters our daily lives. And Jesus calls us to trust in the God that we see in Jesus. "Believe me that I am in God and God is in me."

Jesus calls for basic trust. Jesus calls us to have confidence that Jesus is really, faithfully and significantly at work in the places, the people, the tasks, and the relationships where day in and day out we live and move and have our being. And Jesus calls us to have this belief, this faith, this basic trust, this confidence even when Jesus is not readily visible to us, even when Jesus does not feel present, even on those days when we figure that somehow Jesus stayed behind when we left Valparaiso.

Rather than lingering long over the hiddenness of God, Jesus calls us to focus on the visibility, the accessibility, and the knowledge of God that is ours in Jesus Christ. For Jesus and God are so intimate, the journey and the goal so linked, that the works of healing transformation that Jesus does reveal God's hiddenness. The works that Jesus does declare who God is. The works that Jesus does make clear what God is about in our lives and in the world.

Jesus gives vision to the blind. Jesus feeds the multitudes so that all are satisfied. Jesus enters into relationship with those shunned by society. Jesus forgives sinners. Jesus raises the dead. On the cross Jesus brings war torn nations, cumbersome ecclesial processes, questionable public policies, departed loved ones, unreconciled relationships, and a dying creation home from death. On the cross, Jesus drives out the ruler of this world, drawing all people to himself. And just in case we missed it, just in case we can't see God hidden on a cross, God raised Jesus from death to new life in order to get our attention.

It seems that, in the end, seeing Jesus was enough for Philip. Not much is known about St. Philip. So little, in fact, that Philip shares this day with James the Lesser, just as the two share internment in Rome's Church of the Apostles. So little is known of St. Philip that the Prayer of the Day in LBW doesn't even mention Philip by name. But tradition says that, after Pentecost, Philip proclaimed the Gospel. Philip proclaimed the Gospel.

We have no documentary evidence of Philip's inspiring addresses, stimulating conversations, that Philip was a cherished comrade, or that he led glorious worship. All we're told is that Philip proclaimed the Gospel. And we can safely assume that Philip proclaimed the Gospel to people who didn't understand *paschal mystery*. Philip proclaimed the Gospel to people afraid to sing a new song. Philip proclaimed the Gospel to people who couldn't comprehend how the story of a crucified Jesus, a washing with water, and a meal of bread and wine could constitute the center of their lives, let alone the foundation of community and the heart of the world. But seeing Jesus, Philip was satisfied. So Philip proclaimed the Gospel.

You see, Jesus promised Philip, and Jesus promises us, that Jesus is enough. We can trust Jesus' words. We can trust Jesus' works. Regardless of where we live and move and have our being, the story of crucified Jesus, a washing with water, and a meal of bread and wine are enough for the Church. They are enough for us. For it is in Word, water, bread and wine that we see Jesus doing the works that Jesus does.

Through Word and Sacrament Jesus shows us God and gives us new life. And that is enough for us. And more than enough for us, Jesus promises that Jesus' presence in Word and Sacrament are enough for the world. For, in Christ, our connection to God and new life is so strong that we will do the works of Jesus. For rather than the bread of adversity, we offer the bread of our portion in Christ. Rather than the water of affliction, we offer the water of life. Rather than a word of confusion, we speak a word that says, "This is the way."

Through proclaiming Jesus crucified, washing in Jesus' name, and sharing the bread and cup that are Jesus' body and blood, we give vision to the blind, feed the multitudes so that all are satisfied, enter into relationship with those shunned by society, and raise the dead to new life. As we carry the story of Jesus, the water, bread and wine to the world, war torn nations, cumbersome ecclesial processes, questionable public policies, departed loved ones, unreconciled relationships, and a dying creation come home from death to God.

Each time that we gather around this table in preparation to leave this Liturgical Institute, every time we gather around that table in the places to which we go, Jesus transforms our worry over getting along without him into the gift of power exercised in the life of the Church. As Church we do what Jesus does, which is what God does. We reveal new life hidden in death.

When the Church does its work in the places where it lives and moves and has its being, Christ works and God is revealed. And so, we do in this assembly what we do in the assemblies where we live and move and have our being. Nothing more, but nothing less. We proclaim Christ crucified. We celebrate washing in the Triune Name. We receive the bread and cup, broken and shed for us. We see God. Like Philip we are satisfied. And so we proclaim the Gospel.

This sermon was preached by the Rev Prof Craig Satterlee

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