Reflections from Fr. Dan

On the Sixth Sunday of Easter, we’re reminded not only of all the reasons for our hope but the need to share those reasons with others as well. I think these days it is important for us to take that to heart. Everything we have experienced can tend to make us look more towards the negative. What we have not been able to do, the people we can’t see, the experiences we won’t have. What we need to be focusing on is how much more joyful the celebration will be, what it will feel like when we can once again receive the Eucharist. There is the hope we have in that. The Easter season has two weeks to go, and just as Our Lord ascended and left his disciples to continue his work, we have to be ready for the return to Ordinary Time that should be no less characterized by hope.

In today’s First Reading Philip is one of the Christians scattered by the persecution that arose after the martyrdom of St. Stephen, but that did not deter him or the Apostles from evangelizing. Philip may have had to leave Jerusalem, but there was plenty of work in Samaria. Like Our Lord, he preached and performed signs, and people welcomed his message. He cast out unclean spirits and paved the way for his listeners to be baptized. The Apostles had remained in Jerusalem, despite the persecution, but when they heard of the work Philip had been doing in Samaria, they knew they had something to give as well: the Holy Spirit. Even today we don’t just receive Baptism; we receive the Holy Spirit through the sacrament of Confirmation. Baptism expels evil from us and distances us from evil influences, and Confirmation strengthens us to go out and share the Gospel with others.

In today’s Second Reading St. Peter reminds us that we must always be ready to share the reasons for our hope with others. We have received new life in Christ. We must allow others to receive new life in Christ as well. This doesn’t just mean giving reasons, but showing in our lifestyle that hope has transformed us and sustained us. This has never been more true than today. It is thanks to hope that we sanctify Christ in our hearts. It is thanks to hope that we don’t shy away from explaining the reasons for our hope to everyone who asks, whether they’re curious or skeptical. It is not just what we explain, but how we explain it that lends credence to our message: gentleness and reverence. Jaded Christians undermine the main reason for our hope: the love of God. If we’re mistreated as a result, we are consoled by the fact that we’re imitating Christ in suffering for the sake of good.

In today’s Gospel Our Lord prepares the disciples, and us, for Pentecost. He may be ascending soon, but the Holy Spirit is coming in force. The Lord after the Ascension is only within view of those who have faith. The world had its chance, but without faith, it was only a matter of time before they lost sight of Our Lord. After Calvary, as far as they were concerned, Jesus was gone. The Risen Christ appeared to those who believed in him. The Holy Spirit didn’t just come to us at Pentecost. Today’s words, spoken in the Last Supper, reminded the first disciples, and us, that the Spirit is always with us. Thanks to the Spirit we are never alone and even now, through the Spirit, we maintain communion with the Father and the Son. The love of God is the greatest reason for our hope, and the greatest way we can reciprocate that love is to obey Christ out of love and pass that hope to others.