

Sixth Sunday of Easter, Cycle C
Acts of the Apostles 15:1-2, 22-29
Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8
Revelation 21:10-14, 2-23
John 14:23-29
May 1, 2016
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When I was a teenager, I attended the public high school in a small town near Boston, Massachusetts. I was fortunate in that I enjoyed my high school years. For me, as for many people, the friendships I made at school were characterized by a feeling of closeness unlike anything I've experienced since. Having grown together from childhood through adolescence, we thought we knew each other very well.

Then, one day, my parents announced that we were moving a thousand miles away, to Wisconsin. When my friends heard the news, they decided to make an occasion of my departure. Going-away parties were held which tended to grow emotional as the evening wore on. Old stories were retold, sentimental confessions were made, gifts were given, kind things were said, and I got to kiss all the girls goodbye.

Then, at the last moment, to my intense embarrassment, my parents announced that we weren't going to move after all. I was glad to be staying with my friends, but after all the fuss that had been made about my departure, I felt that by staying put I was failing to carry out my end of the bargain. I know my friends were disconcerted. They had said many of the things they did, only in the apparently well-founded belief that they would never see me again. For months afterward I had to face the blank expressions of acquaintances who had thought I was long gone.

I was reminded of this incident by our Gospel today. Jesus is in the midst of his farewell discourse to his disciples. He's saying goodbye before ascending to the right hand of his Father in heaven. But the gist of his remarks seems to be that he isn't really leaving them after all. He cancels his own farewell when he promises that his Father and he will come to us and be with us always.

And, of course, that promise has been fulfilled. We hear Jesus' voice whenever the Word of God is proclaimed and explained. We receive his body and blood in the Eucharist. He is present whenever we gather in his name. Together we form his Mystical Body. We see him in one another and especially in the poor, the sick and the imprisoned. In fact, we encounter our Savior wherever we turn.

God is also present to us in the gift of the Holy Spirit -- the same Spirit which allows the apostles and elders in our first reading to write to the new gentile Christians that the judgment they make is "the decision of the Holy Spirit, and ours too." And if we remain faithful, we will be like the city described in the book of Revelation: "The city had no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb."