

Fourth Thursday of Lent – 3/6

"And the Father who sent me has Himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard His voice or seen His form, and you do not have His word abiding in you, because you do not believe Him whom He has sent." (John 5:37-38)

To abide with someone implies sharing deeply with that person. Those who abide together cherish each other. More than living together, they breathe together in a deep spiritual part of their being. People who are in abiding relationships are almost as one. They not only read the mood of the other, they understand it as well. Those who abide can see the world from the perspective of the other person even if it differs from how they see it. Those who abide know that they have been given a beautiful gift.

When God's word abides in our hearts we know God. His breath will be in our breath. His thoughts will not be far from our thoughts. We will be one with God and so we see the world and people with God's compassionate eyes. If we had lived two thousand years ago we would have recognized Jesus as the Messiah because of our abiding relationship with the Creator. Those who were drawn to Jesus were pulled in his direction because they listened to the voice of God in their hearts. They saw the beauty of their relationship with the Father mirrored in this prophet from Galilee.

The Pharisees did not abide in God's word. They didn't have a feel for the holy in their lives. They were not drawn to Jesus because they did not see the Father in the Son. And they didn't see the Father because they had no idea what the Father looked like. The scriptures were written in their minds but not in their hearts. They studied the laws of God but only so that they could judge their fellow Jews. They could not see the beauty that radiated from Jesus because they didn't understand it.

Above all else, perhaps this Lent we need to ask for the grace of God's abiding presence. Knowledge of scriptures that remains in the head is not enough. Sacrifice is meaningless and charitable works lack generosity unless they are accomplished in union with Jesus' abiding spirit. We need to pray mightily that everything that we know in our heads can make the journey to our hearts so that it can be transformed from knowledge to relationship. When the word of God abides in our hearts then the word is living and we are engaged in a relationship with the Creator.

Reflection Questions

- 1. What do I harbor in my heart that keeps Jesus from abiding there?*
- 2. What do I know in my head that has not yet reached my heart?*

Prayer: Jesus, may I come to feel You more deeply in my heart this Lent. Help me to respond to the urgings of Your Spirit that rise up in my soul. Amen.