

The Sixth Sunday of Easter

Lectionary B, John 15:9-17

Trinity Church, May 6, 2018

We live in two worlds – one visible and the other invisible. Both enter into our experience. The visible is easier to realize since it is all around us. We may or may not pay full attention to it, however. I have to say a prayer each day to remember to see the color purple. Jim rightly says that I'm not very absorbent. He's a master at malapropos. Translated, my observation skills of the obvious are not well tuned.

Needing an excuse, no doubt, I can say that I prefer to spend time discovering the invisible world. That happens to be true, but somehow we are meant to incorporate both worlds into our experience.

After our Sunday services and the adult class, Michael and I often pinch ourselves to verify that both worlds are vibrantly alive here at Trinity. We have the outward and visible signs of sacramental life in our worship, but to see your faces and to experience the incredible spiritual energy going on in you lifts Michael and me to pure

rejoicing. It is inspiring to see what is going on in you in the aura of complete humility. Your loving kindness is far better than any prayer. When you do this you are living in both worlds – the visible in the offering of gifts to others, and the invisible that lives in “the beauty of grace so tender and so healing.”

One of my spiritual companions and dear friend is Carolyn Goddard. She is spiritually alive and has a gift of words. One of her prayers I have shared with a few of you and I share another with you today that expresses what

I mean to say. A prayer card for each of you is in your service leaflet.

She wrote me this beautiful short thank you note that says so much of the invisible in the present moment:

“I am touched by your kindness and goodness which expresses far better than any prayer the beauty of grace so tender and so healing.”

Michael and I see this in you. You may find the language of mystical theology and experience a bit foreign, but you are living that

life in your kindness and goodness,
freely given with humility, that
expresses the beauty of invisible
grace so tender and so healing.

Perhaps you see why Michael and
I often live in ecstasy when we are
with you.

You may not know the words to
express what it means to live in
both worlds, the visible and
invisible; but continue to let both
worlds joined together bring you
joy.

This for me is the message of
love that Jesus shared with his
disciples: “As the Father has loved
me, so I have loved you; abide in

my love.” “I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.” This is the remembrance of the Jesus community toward the end of the first century; and John’s Gospel is referred to as “The Mystical Way in the Fourth Gospel.” (L. W. Countryman)

Perhaps you wake up at night on occasion and have profound thoughts. Without getting up you hope you can remember what you thought by the morning. Some thoughts at night, of course, can be loaded with fear and anxiety; but

I'm referring to the happy thoughts. This happened to me on the night of Easter. I woke up, and instead of worrying about getting back to sleep, I just thought about our Easter service together. We had the biggest attendance in recent years; and your participation was spirit filled. So many made their offerings of kindness and goodness in preparation for the celebration; and in the outward and visible signs of worship, inward and spiritual grace were shared and experience. Even though Michael and I are among leaders of worship in this congregation, we know so

well that our life together isn't about us. I remind myself about that daily. I regret when I play wrong notes on the organ, but the service isn't about me. It's about God's presence in this community of faith, and your response to an unseen world lived in the present moment.

While nothing needs to be said to experience the invisible world, we nevertheless seek the promptings of the Spirit to give voice to what we hear in our souls. We do this to "be changed for the healing of the world...that we may listen for truth in every living

soul.” (Philip Newell) This hearing may be experienced in the silence around us...in fellowship and worship...or in a simple smile and a hug. It may be a moment when we are listening; when “the beauty of grace is expressed so tenderly with healing.”

Let us continue to live into the lives we have been given, to give thanks for gifts seen and unseen, and express our life in the Spirit with one another and in outreach to the community. This, like most days, is a day for rejoicing.

