

## **Reflection on the Gospel-Easter 6C (John 14:23-29)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

“Take from my heart all painful anxiety.” This is the prayer of the first Sister of Mercy, Catherine McAuley. It echoes the words of the Johannine Jesus, “Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid.” It is all a matter of love. Disciples of Jesus know that they need not be anxious or afraid “for perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). Today’s gospel makes it clear that “love” finds expression in the keeping of God’s word.

In the prologue to the gospel, John has presented Jesus as the Word, the *Logos* who has been with God from the beginning. Jesus is the word of God in human form, the embodiment of God’s communication with the cosmos. Jesus keeps God’s word. Disciples are to demonstrate their love for Jesus by keeping the word that he both embodies and proclaims. In other words, they are to live as Jesus has lived and be faithful to what he has taught in God’s name. They will thus become a dwelling place for the divine. The implications of this teaching are overwhelming. If we truly believed and “kept” the words of the Johannine Jesus, we might be more inclined to treat each other and “our common home” with the utmost reverence and respect.

Jesus refers once more to his imminent departure. When he is no longer physically present, God’s Advocate, the Holy Spirit, will be with them. The Greek word translated as “advocate” carries a range of meanings. It literally means “one called alongside to help” whenever necessary. In other words, the disciples need not be troubled or afraid because they are never alone. The Holy Spirit, the Advocate, is always with them to defend them, to intercede for them, to comfort them, as well as to keep them focussed on all that Jesus has said to them. Earlier in this chapter of John’s gospel, the Advocate is called the Spirit of Truth who remains with them and is actually in them. Only through the power of the Spirit will the disciples be empowered to “keep the word” of Jesus.

Jesus gifts his friends with peace, a peace “that the world cannot give.” In John’s gospel, the “world” is first and foremost the tenting place of God’s Word: it is God’s creation. Occasionally, as here, it refers to whatever is opposed to Jesus as God’s Word. The gift of peace that Jesus brings is a peace that casts out fear. It carries all the weight of the Hebrew *shalom*: it brings total well-being and peace of mind. True peace comes from being centred in God and gathering in all of God’s creation. As Jesus leaves them, the proper stance for the disciples is joy in the knowledge that, although he is going away, he is also “coming to them” since the “Father” will send the Spirit to be with them. The gospel reading thus leaves us to find peace in the unfathomable mystery of God.