

## Homily 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter Year A 2023

Since the Ascension last Thursday, we have entered another time of waiting: the Advent before the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is an Advent shared with Mary who was also waiting on the Holy Spirit after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension. It is an advent of expectation but it was unclear how the Holy Spirit would appear and what would be the result.

Ronald Rolheiser believes that, *'Every generation needs to experience Pentecost for itself. It needs God's spirit and it needs it in its own particular way.'* Scripture assures us that the holy spirit is not a generic force, one-size-fits-all, but a person, a relationship, a spirit that has "particular manifestations" and comes to each of us uniquely so that the understanding and strength that we receive are geared to help us in our own particular struggles. This is both reassuring and challenging. The Easter Season is one of hope and expectation, and of new life as seen in the plants and flowers all around us; a season of new birth and joy. Hope. However. is what the world cries out for the most.

So, what does it mean to be a person of patient hope?

Henri Nouwen offers this insight in what it means to be a person who waits;

*A waiting person is patient. The word 'patience' means the willingness to stay where we are and live the situation out to the full in the belief that something hidden there will be shown to us. Impatient people are always expecting the real to happen somewhere else and therefore want to go there. The moment is empty. But patient people dare to stay where they are. Patient living means to live actively in the present and wait there. Waiting, then is not passive. It involves nurturing the moment, as a mother nurtures the child that is growing in her womb.* (The Path of Waiting)

More than anything Teilhard de Chardin was a man of great hope and belief in God. He was a good scientist but he was also a Christian, a priest, and a man whose ultimate vision of things was formed by the gospels. Central to his whole system of thought was his rock-bottom belief that ultimately all of history, cosmic and human, would come together, in Christ, into one community of life and love (as promised by Jesus and as summarized in the early Christian hymn in Ephesians 1, 3-10 *God, with full wisdom and understanding,<sup>9</sup> let us know his secret purpose. This was what God wanted, and he planned to do it through Christ.<sup>10</sup> His goal was to carry out his plan at the right time. He planned that all things in heaven and on earth would be joined together in Christ as the head.*

This vision was the framework within which Teilhard ultimately set out his scientific theories. But he was surrounded by Christian and secular colleagues, who had a far less hopeful view of things. One day he was challenged this way: "You have an enchanted view of history, believing that everything will one day culminate in a wonderful 'kingdom' of peace and love, but suppose we blow up the world in a nuclear war, what happens to your schema of things then?"

Teilhard's reply reveals his steadfast hope: *"If we blow up the world it would be a great tragedy because it would set things back millions of years. But history will still one day culminate in a kingdom of peace and love, not because my theory says so, but because God promised it and, in the resurrection, has shown the power to bring this about, despite the things we do."* True hope is the ability to say: *"It might take a million years or so longer, but it will happen because God promised it."*

The world needs this kind of hope from us too!

**A little old lady answered a knock on the door one day** only to be confronted by a well-dressed young man carrying a vacuum cleaner. Good morning," said the young man. "If I could take a couple of minutes of your time, I would like to demonstrate the very latest in high-powered vacuum cleaners.

"Go away!" said the old lady. "I haven't got any money!" and she proceeded to close the door.

Quick as a flash, the young man wedged his foot in the door and pushed it wide open. "Don't be too hasty!" he said. "Not until you have at least seen my demonstration." And with that, he emptied a bucket of horse manure onto her hallway carpet. "If this vacuum cleaner does not remove all traces of this horse manure from your carpet, Madam, I will personally eat the remainder." **The old lady stepped back**

and said, "Well I hope you've got a really good appetite, because they cut off my electricity this morning."