



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

May 24, 2009

Easter 7 - Reconciliation

When I was at seminary I spent quite a bit of time in Northern Ireland at a peace community called Corrymeela. It was through Corrymeela that I discovered an organization called the community of the cross of nails. The community of the cross of nails was established at Coventry cathedral and today it has an international network of over 150 projects in 60 countries. The community of the cross of nails is committed to a shared ministry of reconciliation. It all began in 1940 in Coventry England during a bombing blitz by the German Luftwaffe. The most devastating damage to the people was the bombing of Coventry cathedral. The roof had gone and all that was left were some of the walls. The stonemason of Coventry cathedral found 2 timbers lying in the shape of the cross and he tied them together and that cross is still in the cathedral. The provost of the cathedral, Dick Howard found nails from the roof and tied them together to make a cross. On Christmas day in 1940 the Provost made a national radio broadcast in which he made a commitment, not to revenge, but to forgiveness and reconciliation with those responsible for the destruction. He vowed that after the war he would work with those who had been enemies to build a kinder, more Christ like world. That saw the birth of the community of the cross of nails of which Corrymeela, Northern Ireland is now one of the huge success stories.

As a powerful symbol of reconciliation, the ruin of Coventry cathedral was not bulldozed. The old cathedral has been incorporated into the new cathedral telling the world that out of destruction and

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Established in 1847

210 North Main Street Versailles, KY 40383 859.873.3481 info@stjohnsky.com www.stjohnsky.com



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

May 24, 2009

violence can come new life. Yet the work of new life has something always to do with reconciliation and it has to do with a cross. And sometimes it has to do with suffering.

This past Wednesday we celebrated the eve of Ascension Day. Ascension Day is one of the most important days of the year, but it always falls on a Thursday so does not get the attention it deserves. Yet during the service there is a small yet powerful act. After the gospel, the paschal candle that has burned at every service since Easter was distinguished. Christ is no longer physically visible to his disciples. He has ascended to his god and our god.

All of a sudden, those disciples who had been so dependent on Jesus to show them the way, so dependent on Jesus to guide them into truth, so used to Jesus being the one to speak words of god in whatever situation they found themselves in, were all of a sudden alone. Yes, Jesus had promised the spirit to help them, but they were still alone. Up to now they had been observers of the work of reconciliation between god and his children and now all that Jesus had taught them, all Jesus had shown them, was now up to them. They could no longer be the observers but had to become the doers. To be responsible that the mission of Christ did not end now that he was gone.

This time of ascension, the focus on the reconciliation ministry of the disciples of Christ is why over the last few weeks our gospel readings have been from the last supper according to John. The last supper of John has no bread or wine, it has Jesus washing his disciples feet and giving a long talk

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Established in 1847

210 North Main Street Versailles, KY 40383 859.873.3481 info@stjohnsky.com www.stjohnsky.com



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

May 24, 2009

that last from the beginning of chapter 13 to the end of chapter 17 of the gospel. Most of what Jesus says has to do with him leaving and what his disciples are now called to do.

The next day through the crucifixion of Christ the world is reconciled to God yet after that the work of the disciples is to reconcile god's children to each other. That is the mission we are called to and the ministry we are to live. That is the message of ascension.

Out of the suffering of the crucifixion, out of the hatred shown towards the early Christians, out of the deaths of thousands of Christians used as lion food, from the lives of the martyrs and the saints, and from the ruins of a cathedral bombed by an enemy, we follow in a rich tradition given to us by Jesus that our work is one of reconciliation with each other.

It is highly unlikely any of us will be subject to acts of violence or even death because of our faith. But we all are tempted towards the violence towards others that is created by our words, our actions, our prejudices, our judgments.

I still admire the work being done by the community of the cross of nails in areas like the Middle East and the Sudan and the other broken places it is working in.

But I far more admire the work being done by individuals on those areas of life and relationships that need reconciliation. Not one of us is exempt. Yet all of us are commissioned by the ascended Christ to not now just be the hearers of the word but the doers of the word.

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Established in 1847

210 North Main Street Versailles, KY 40383 859.873.3481 info@stjohnsky.com www.stjohnsky.com



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

May 24, 2009

amen

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Established in 1847

210 North Main Street Versailles, KY 40383 859.873.3481 info@stjohnsky.com www.stjohnsky.com