

CAN WE UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER?

Pentecost shows the way!

It is timely today to meditate today on what spirit binds us and what spirit creates discord among us. Let us delve into the factors that keep us from understanding one another.

Friar Sydney wrote this reflection. There are so many families whom I know. I want to mention abstractly just one of them. They were a lovely, large family, so rarely seen today. They all adored their father. They all enjoyed his wealth. Their father was a very generous man. He saw to it that all had more than they needed. One day the father died. The problems then showed up. Everybody was talking about his/her share in the inheritance. Discord set in. The family is today broken. Brother does not see brother. Sister does not see sister. Brother does not see sister. The children do not see their mother. The mother does not see the children. Each speaks of the way he/ she has been wronged by the other members of the family. According to the children, the worst culprit is their mother. She has swallowed everything.

Terrible isn't it? Is this the harvest of the seed sown by the father?

Pentecost means fiftieth day. It was the second of three great Jewish Feasts. It was a day of gratitude. It was a day of thanksgiving for the completion of the harvest. We have seen Christ come into this world. We have seen him sow the Spirit of God. We have seen this Spirit work wonders among the blind, the sick, the lame and hungry. We saw him condemned and yet, return to those who condemned and deserted him. We saw him coax his disciples to raise their eyes and look beyond their own little world. We saw Christ let his disciples experience His Ascension. Today he appears again. While they, perplexed, dumfounded and disappointed, still were closeted in a little upper room. Rightly, we are not told where that room was situated. We only know that room was in a house in Jerusalem where people from every nation under heaven had come to express their harvest gratitude. They spoke different languages. They came with different intentions. They had different motives. It is this motley group who witness a sound that made them assemble together. To their astonishment, some Galilean spoke to them in their own native language. To their astonishment, some unheard of illiterates spoke the language they understood. This is really astonishing. We all know how difficult it is to learn another language. We all know how difficult it is to speak and write in another language. It takes years of listening to the phonetics and exercising the syntax structures of a language, before we feel at ease in another language.

Yet we are told that these illiterates spoke and people, coming from various nations, understood them. It is the hearers and not the speakers who make this claim! This was the novel experience of the new harvest, Pentecost! Why is it that we rarely experience such a harvest today? St Paul gives us a clue. No one can say, "Jesus is Lord unless he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit. [I Cor 12:3]

It is really not easy to understand one another unless we shed our mold of feelings and

expression. Each does have his oddities that jar the sensibilities of another. Each does have to ascend out of his/her set habits and expressions before reaching out to others. To understand someone else, we need to dethrone ourselves and enthrone the Other in our midst. And in order to enthrone the Other in our midst, we surely have to forgive self-centered habits and ways in others, but even more: we have to forgive them in our selves. It is for this reason that the Lord says:

“Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.”

Unfortunately, we often retain the sins of others and ourselves. Therefore, we do not harvest the fruits of God's Spirit among us. It is very striking that no mention is made of the place where the Apostles experienced that the Holy Spirit came and dwelt among them. I would like to believe that such details were intentionally left out. Why? Because such a situation could be any time and any place where people closet themselves.

Do we get the hint? Are we ready to say: Jesus is Lord! Are we ready to forget the pain, the insults, and the injustice we have to bear and experience? Are we ready to ascend beyond our horizons and see them from the vantage point of the Lord in our midst? Is it not true that our cities look like jewels when we fly over them at night? If this reflection brings Shalom! To your heart, you will know that

YOU ARE LOVED,

Deacon Dan

Thanks to - Friar Sydney Mascarenhas 1999 for this homily.