

## 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter 2007

Those of you who have heard me preach over the years know that I'm usually looking for something in ordinary, everyday experience that might connect with the scriptures for the Sunday. My hope is that if I pay attention to what's going on in my life, or yours, that some inspiration will come that might relate the great themes of life that we hear in the Scriptures to our everyday activities, work, play, love, relationships, whatever.

This week the inspiration came on the golf course. (Please groan if you'd like) I am such an awful golfer, it's really embarrassing but there's enough I like about the experience to keep me coming back. Recently I began taking lessons with a golf pro who is a parishioner here and lo and behold he's actually teaching me something. I've been trying to improve and even take lessons from time to time for 10 years in the futile hope that I would learn something. The problem has been that I've never really had a "feel" for what to do. I would Mostly hope and pray that by some miraculous twist of the club the ball would actually go someplace. Sometimes yes, mostly no. But, somehow this pro, Michael Fleming is guiding me in a way that I'm getting a feel for what's supposed to be happening in a swing.

And that's where the inspiration for this homily comes from.

The Holy Spirit will teach you everything and remind you of what I have said. The Holy Spirit is the divine teacher who does so much more than give you the "content", the What of God, But the Holy Spirit is the one who gives us a "feel for God". The Holy Spirit reveals the "Who" and not the What. The Holy Spirit is the divine teacher who opens our hearts to love God.

Think for a moment of the many teachers, mentors, guides you have had in your life. Who are the ones who have taught you more than the "what" and rather given you a feel for something? And more often than not, that "feel for" becomes a love for, a passion for. And that is what is so wonderful and awesome about teaching. When you see someone getting a feel for, growing in love for, becoming passionate about: whatever "music, medicine, sports, the arts...You name it. It is an incredible feeling to know that that passion for something you love is being shared.

I think that the scriptures today through the Spirit, teach us and give us a feel for who the Church is and who God is. In the reading from the Acts of the Apostles we see the early church struggling with its identity as a Jewish sect that is confronting the startling reality that the message of Jesus is for the Gentiles as well as Jews. Those early church leaders, with the guidance of the Spirit, have to have a feel for what it means to be faithful to the gospel but not placing burdens on the faithful. They are willing to adapt, to be flexible to

say "Circumcision is not a requirement for belonging" We can't risk losing people to the Gospel by too heavy burdens. This scripture gives us a feel for what it means to be church even now. We need to discern the Spirit personally as do church leaders so that the Good news of Jesus does not become a burden with "dos and don'ts". It's got to be a balance of the spirit and the law.

And that's what is so striking about the Gospel. It gives us a "feel for who God is" and what God wants for us. God is personal and all about relationship. In this passage from John, Jesus speaks of his relationship with the Father. We get a feel for the special intimacy in God. But it is not just a "two-way" between Father and Son. The love and intimacy within God is revealed in the Spirit of God, who "will teach you everything and remind you of what I have said".

But this inner life of God is meant to be shared. Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. That is what we receive from Jesus. And this is where I believe the real "feel for God" comes in. In the midst of an "unpeaceful" world, a world of ongoing violence, war, conflict of all kinds, we can get a feel for God in the peace that Christ gives us. Don't let your hearts be troubled or afraid, even when there is so much troubling you. Can you get a "feel for " who God desires to be for you in these words. Can you let the Holy Spirit be a mentor, guide, teacher, giving you not just a knowledge of God, but a love and passion, a true feel for God.

Tonight I invite you to get into the "swing" of things. Feel the Spirit which moves among us, moves within us, moves in our world to give us that special "feel for God".