

Newsletter Article for May 2023

Dear Friends in Christ:

The second half of the Easter season incorporates something of a formula for normality. It is not a formula to get back to the old—pre Resurrection normal, but a formula to adjust to the new normal—one in which the Resurrection of Christ has happened and the waiting and watching for the consummation of the Kingdom of God has begun.

On 5 Easter, Jesus promises that he goes to prepare a place for us and will return to take us to himself (Jn 14). My wife was talking about when her family built a home in 1970, the whole family lived in the garage while the rest of the house was being finished. They had the beds lined up in a row, and, at least for the kids, it was like an extended vacation in a motel room. We make the best of living in the garage or motel room or whatever resting place you have found. We can even call it normal, until our final destination is prepared and the Lord summons us to join him in the new creation.

On 6 Easter, Jesus promises that he will not leave us orphaned but will be perceived by us even as the Paraclete helps us to see the truth and speak the truth (also Jn 14). It would be easy for us to concede that corruption and lies are everywhere and the best we can do is to find a way to profit or benefit from the present state of things. The Spirit of Truth, however, reminds us who we are and whose we are. The Truth will not let us go.

On Ascension, it sinks in that the wait may be longer than we would like, and we may not see the return of Christ and the Re-summing up of all things (Acts 3:21) in our lifetimes. Yet the ultimate future has become flesh and dwelt among us and so we live as people of hope—fully open to that ultimate future.

On 7 Easter, We have the high priestly prayer from John 17 in which Jesus prays for his Church, “That they may be one.” It must be understood as a commandment by the church, yet we have wasted the last 150 years thinking that unity could be had by church officials and theologians, and they in turn have happily blown up every possibility of unity the way Lucy pulls the football from in front of Charlie Brown. Church unity must happen as Christian laypeople recognize a common cause and common destiny with other Christian laypeople, join together in concrete acts of mission, and administer the mutual conversation and consolation of the faithful within their circles of influence.

Finally comes Pentecost. None of what I have described above is possible without the ongoing miracle of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. If we are to bear fruit, If we are to wait and watch, If we are to live as people of hope, If we are to find unity in our circles of acquaintance, if we are to show forth the new normal of those who wait for the Return of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead, it can only be by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit and the Gifts of the Spirit and the Fruits of the Spirit.

Yours in Christ,
John S. McKenzie