

“Do not let your hearts be troubled...I will come back to you.” Jesus keeps his word. Coming back from the cross proved that.

He asks only one thing of us: Love him. To love him, means keeping his word. Keeping his word ultimately means keeping our word. We see the reminder of this above the entrance of the church: “If you love me, keep my commandments.”

He said if we do so, if we keep his word, Jesus will dwell within us. I must say, I have seen the “dwelling places” of God in this parish. I have seen it in those who received first communion: Their souls are open and ready for Jesus abiding presence. We all started that way.

In a interviews with the kids, some years back, prior to their first communion, I asked them questions to see if how prepared they were. I asked one, “What do you say when I say the body of Christ?” He looked me in the eye and said, “Alleluia.” I said, “He’s ready.”

I have witnessed his dwelling place among couples preparing for marriage. A couple I married this weekend told me their greatest experience of their love for one another came while attending Mass together at the Cathedral – and because of that I told them that God will keep their love forever young, forever beautiful.

+Proof of this? A couple weeks ago Al and Margaret Broaddus, on their 50th anniversary, renewed their vows and pledged, when asked, that they were still open for children. (:

I have seen the dwelling place of God in those of you who commit yourselves to coming to church, no matter what the cost; you will keep your word for Jesus Christ. Church is first and foremost in your lives.

I have seen mothers and fathers, with the kids hanging all over them, yet they come each week. +I remember years ago my sister-in-law, who is a fantastic, had to take her child out and as she carried him, he called out, “Don’t beat me mom!” He will be at VCU this fall...

I have seen it in those who volunteer in this church – your love for Christ is real, alive. He abides in you. I am ever grateful for your generosity, for Jesus is present in our sacrifices, be it our time or finances, made for his Cathedral.

I have experienced his presence in our students. Often half of those who come to weekday Mass are students. Most confessions are often made by students and young adults. (And no, they do not have more to confess than the rest of us!)

I will miss our graduates, as you have been such a gift to my priesthood.

Most profoundly, I have experienced his presence at the end of life, the family surrounding their dying loved one, whispering, "We will see you again. It is ok, it is ok."

+The story is told that after Helen Keller's teacher, Annie Sullivan, had given her the names of physical objects in sign language, Miss Sullivan attempted to explain God and tapped out the symbols for the name "God." Much to Miss Sullivan's surprise, Helen spelled back,

"Thank you for telling me God's name, Teacher, for He has touched me many times before." How could Helen Keller have known about God? Although she was blind, deaf and unable to speak, Helen Keller knew God, for God had shown Himself to her. That is "revelation" of an indwelling God about whom today's Scripture readings speak.

Jesus' abiding presence means peace through the crosses of life; it does not hide behind the cross. His peace means obtaining courage to face anything life throws at you.

I cannot help but think of that Italian man who was martyred a number of years ago in Iraq. Facing the terrorists who were preparing to behead him, he said to the camera "Now you will see how a Roman dies." That is peace and God's abiding presence at the end of our lives.

*The Book of Revelation tells us to always keep the end in mind, for the Judgement awaits all of us. Everything we do in this world has implications for the next. There are three things you do not want to hear when you get to the Pearly gates of heaven:

Number three: "You're an organ donor? Please wait in the lobby until all your parts are here."

Number two: "Hey pal, maybe we don't believe in you either."

And the number one thing you don't want to hear is, "Security!"

+Here is an Irish lyric: "Paddy Murphy went to Mass, never missed a Sunday. But Paddy Murphy went to hell, for what he did on Monday."

One day does not suffice, for we need to stay close to Jesus every day of our lives.

+Someone once said, "Can a rock that has been in the sunlight all day not fail to give off warmth and heat at night?" Can a Christian who has lived in the sunlight of God's love not fail to give off warmth and love?

Perhaps we have all know such people, as they are God's light in our darkness, they are the Son's warmth to us as they always remained in his presence. That is what we are all called to.

+A boy goes with his father on a walk. They come across a batch of ripe berries. The boy is in heaven! However, the hour grows late, yet the boy doesn't want to leave. He asks his father if he can stay a bit longer.

His father says to him, "Okay, I'll start out and you may stay a bit longer. However, make sure you do not get separated from me. Keep calling, 'Father! Father!' and I will answer you. But as soon as my voice fades, come running."

Stay united with God through prayer and the Eucharist and we are assured of a peace that can never be found in this world, for we will know he is always with us when we call out.

Prayer and the Eucharist is our guarantee of God's abiding presence in our lives, both in this world and the world to come. Believe – Trust - and "your hearts will be filled with gladness."