

Homily – Jn. 14: 23-29
6th Sunday of Easter – 22nd May 2022

“God sometimes withdraws from us so that we may draw closer to Him.”

Four-year-old Marion West shouted and jumped for joy each noon when her mother came home from work on her lunch break. Her mother would pick her up at the neighbour’s. They would hurry home, eat lunch, and play together. But Marion would become hysterical when her mother left again after lunch.

One day, her mother stopped coming home for lunch. Marion was saddened. She wondered why her mother stopped coming. She wondered why her mother stopped eating and playing with her. She wondered if her mother still loved her as much as she once did.

Years later, Marion learned that her mother still came home each noon. She sat at the kitchen window, eating her lunch and watching Marion play in the neighbour’s yard. All the while she longed to be with Marion. She longed to hold her very close, especially when she cried. But it was for Marion’s good that she didn’t. Eventually Marion adjusted to her mother’s absence and grew up in a healthy way.

Looking back on it now, Marion sees why her mother stopped coming. It was for her own good, for her own growth and development.

Well, this story has something in common with today's Gospel. For in today's Gospel, Jesus says in effect to His disciples: "You are sad that I tell you I must leave you. You are distressed and fearful. But I tell you, it's better for you if I go. For then my Father will send the Holy Spirit to help you grow and develop in a new way".

In other words, Jesus is saying to His disciples that it's time for Him to leave them for a while. It's time for them to begin a new phase in their spiritual growth.

On Easter Monday, the 18th of April I had made an emergency trip to India realizing that Sajeer my spiritual son and friend who was for years suffering from low platelet count, was now having mental health issues. I was on a special mission to be with him and to support him. I spent qualitative time with him, took him to various hospitals, doctors, psychiatrists etc. I found him making a good recovery while I was with him. But of course, he had his struggles. And on Tuesday, the 17th, he talked to me a few times early in the morning. At around 8.30 am in India, while his wife was speaking to me, he without giving us any clue, forced God to change His plans and slipped away. Sajeer was just 32. His wife

is 30, and his children 8 and 11. I have been very badly hit. I still haven't come to terms with it, just wondering if it's a dream or a reality. Someone who was so part of me, someone who was a constant presence in my life, someone who would get in touch with me several times a day, has suddenly disappeared from the scene. I know I have done my part. But I don't have an answer to the question: "but why...?" I don't know if God is programming struggles into our lives in order to help us grow spiritually. But I wish to place my trust in Him who walks with me all my way.

Well, I close with that poem that I have given in the Newsletter this weekend whose Author is unknown:

“For ev’ry pain we must bear,
For ev’ry burden, ev’ry care,
There’s a reason.

For ev’ry grief that bows the head,
For ev’ry teardrop that is shed,
There’s a reason.

For ev’ry hurt, for ev’ry plight,
For ev’ry lonely, pain-racked night,
There’s a reason.

But if we trust our God, as we should,
it will turn out for our good.
He knows the reason.”

God bless you all, **Amen.**