

May 17, 2026
The Seventh Sunday of Easter

Acts 1: 6-14
Psalm 68: 1-10, 32-35
I Peter 4:12-14;5:6-11
John 17: 1-11

I want us to spend some time today simply wondering. Wondering what it would be like to lose Jesus.

Today is a difficult day in scripture. The disciples who had already lost Jesus once are about to lose him again. And for good this time.

Can you imagine? They watched Jesus be crucified not too long ago and now they are watching him ascend into heaven. Saying goodbye. Not knowing what that would mean for their lives. Not understanding.

I picture them reaching their arms up, standing on their tip toes, trying to hold on for one more moment. It's the goodbye they didn't want to have to say. It's the reality that this person whom they love is leaving them...again. And I was struck by the fact that even though the Easter season is meant to be a time of joyful celebration, it's in some ways marked by the reality of this moment, this week— the moment Christ ascends out of their sight, and they are left on their tip toes grasping for just one more day.

Loss is like that. We can't comprehend life without the person we love. We can't fathom how to move through the world without them. And I don't care how much reassurance folks might give you...I don't even care how much reassurance Jesus gave his disciples...losing someone who you had built your life around feels like an impossible and even cruel task.

Jesus tried to tell them...you won't be alone. The Holy Spirit is coming...just you wait and see. It will be OK. I promise.

You got give it to Jesus for trying. He prays so hard for their comfort and reassurance. Even if that attempt, in the moment, might have felt like one old, worn out cliché.

Because the reality is that the disciples couldn't have known if everything was going to be OK. How could they? They were moving into a week full of uncertainty. Day after day of loneliness and grief. An entire week before their hope would be restored and the Holy Spirit would arrive on the scene.

A week of wondering if they could trust what Jesus had promised.

Could they have faith?

To me, that's the question we are faced with this week. Can we have faith when we are having a hard time just finding hope?

As a priest, I'm faced with this question often. And it's a question that is always hard to answer. Not because I don't believe or understand how to hold on to God in the depths of uncertainty. But because trying to tell someone how to have hope when their world has fallen apart is one of the greatest challenges of walking alongside someone's pain.

It would be easy to dig into clichés out of our own reticence of meeting someone where it hurts the most. Words...sufficient words...can be hard to come by.

And so we often hear words coming out of our mouths like...God will always be with you. God understands how much you hurt. Just have faith. Things will get better.

But words like those fall flat because so often we are just simply on our tip toes grasping for more time, more love, more joy. We want a solution, but we don't know where it is going to come from.

To me – this is the void between Ascension and Pentecost. The void when we are left wondering how to move through our days. Can we have enough faith to get to the other side?

When the disciples were left in their void – they went home and prayed. They had reached their emotional and spiritual limit and in that moment, there was no other response but prayer. In many ways, their story in Acts is about the process of letting go of what was and facing what will be. And, in that moment, I am sure they had no clue how to get there. Because there weren't words worthy of their need. So, they did the only thing they could do...they prayed.

For those of us who have known God through our own hard times, we understand what the words from 1 Peter are all about – Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. We know what it means to remember that God will restore, support, and strengthen us. If you have experienced that overwhelming sense of peace when the bottom has dropped out – you get what hope is all about. You know what it means to put your faith in a god that will bring you out of those dark voids. But, no cliché can give you that peace. We each, in our own time, must find it within ourselves to trust God's promises. To give them a chance.

Pope Francis described such moments like this: *"To Christians, the future does have a name, and its name is Hope. Feeling hopeful does not mean to be optimistically naïve and ignore the tragedy humanity is facing. Hope is the virtue of a heart that doesn't lock itself into darkness, that doesn't dwell on the past, does not simply get by in the present, but is able to see a tomorrow."*¹

I believe all of that to be true. I also believe that living into that kind of hopefulness is extremely hard at times. I wish I could instill in each of you the ability to hope in God but someday the

¹ https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20170426_videomessaggio-ted-2017.html

best I can do, the best any of us can do, is offer those well-worn phrases and pray that some of those seeds will take root as you find your own path of faith. Not big answers but glimmers of God to grasp onto.

So, for those of you who are on your own journey of finding God in the midst of the void or for those of you who are loving someone through their own difficult journey, I want to share portions of a poem which was written in honor of the late Bishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador. These words are about the little steps we each share with one another in our moments of darkness.

*No statement says all that could be said.
 No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession
 brings perfection, no pastoral visit brings wholeness....
 This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one
 day will grow. We water the seeds already planted
 knowing that they hold future promise.
 We lay foundations that will need further development.
 We provide yeast that produces effects
 far beyond our capabilities.
 We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of
 liberation in realizing this.
 This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.
 It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning,
 a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's
 grace to enter and do the rest.²*

What this poem reminds me of is that we can't provide the big answers and we can't make someone understand how to trust God through it all. But, we can show God's love to those in darkness. Somedays, it may just be about the tiny bits of light that we allow in. But these bits of light matter. They are the seeds that may be incomplete today but will give space for God to enter in to do the rest. Amen.

² <https://www.romerotrue.org.uk/romero-prayer/>