

In 1966 the band Buffalo Springfield wrote a protest song called *For What It's Worth*. Accompanying an iconic guitar riff, Stephen Stills delivers this classic opening line: “There’s something happening here, what it is ain’t exactly clear...” So full confession, any time I read the 14th chapter of John’s gospel, these lyrics run through my mind! Jesus seems to be talking in riddles – he’s leaving to go to the Father, but he’s not leaving; he won’t be seen, but you’ll see him. And more: I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. You can forgive the apostles for wondering what he’s talking about. It does become clear later on, but only because of the gift of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit.

Understand that the next couple of weeks are all pointing to Pentecost, arguably the third most important Christian feast after Easter and Christmas. Ironically, the first reading comes chronologically after the Gospel, after Pentecost, when the apostles fully understand the importance of the Holy Spirit. Did you notice that strange statement in the first reading that the Samaritan Christians “...had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” There was some remedial action to be taken, apparently. What was that about? Stay tuned.

When Jesus speaks to the apostles at the Last Supper, he is attempting to describe a reality that He is fully immersed in and can belong to them as well. The Trinity is often described as a dance among three intertwined beings, moving in self-revelation and love, each distinct yet equal and of one being. Jesus, being fully human and fully divine, represents the doorway into this mutual, supernatural dance. Here’s the key point – when Jesus dies, his physical presence will cease as he enters that door, but he will be replaced by the Holy Spirit, who will keep the door open to anyone who wants to enter. How to enter? Obey Jesus, open yourself to Jesus. Note that you don’t have to die to experience this reality – Jesus opened the door! You can share in this mutual dance of the Trinity while you’re a human being walking the earth! Many Christian mystics such as Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and St. Catherine of Siena have written extensively of this experience. Sound too good to be true?

The world we live in is experienced through our five senses. It is consistent, it is discoverable, it is at times wonderful, it is at times horrifying. We know it quite well, and we’ve gotten so good at explaining it that science has become the new answer machine, the new religion, the new god that so many currently worship. Ironically, even though we are so good at science,

so good at shining a light on the working of the physical world, so competent and sure of ourselves – even though *we think we see*, we are actually blind. Jesus names it today: “The Spirit of Truth the world cannot accept, since it (the world) neither sees him nor recognizes him...” But, Jesus says, *you see me*, and that’s what makes the difference.

The spiritual journey is about seeing what the world cannot see. There is a vibrant spiritual existence intertwined with our human existence at all times, moving in and out of our reality with consummate ease. Have you ever seen it? Sensed it? Touched it? Most people get a taste of the spiritual when they are witnessing the death of a loved one. It’s as if the doorway to the spiritual is made of mist. The dying person often sees right through it, speaking to deceased family members, marveling at the scenery, anxious to be a part of it all. They want to share it with you. Have you noticed in the papers that ICU nurses working at the bedside of dying, isolated COVID patients are often distraught that they, not the family, are the ones shepherding people through that door? Why the discomfort? Because they know that this privileged passage is best experienced when love is present in abundance. They can only provide a very little of what the family could provide, and yes, that’s sad. But even their simple caring presence, buffered as it is by masks and gowns and shields, is powerful. *Love is the dance floor.*

Miracles, healings, revelations, apparitions, prophecies – all of these things which are utterly ridiculous to the world are commonplace occurrences to those who know Jesus, know the Spirit, and are loved by the Father. I can say without hesitation that the longer I am on the Trinitarian dance floor the more and more I see these remarkable manifestations. I don’t quite take them for granted, but I’m not as surprised to see them as I once was. Reading the Acts of the Apostles, especially the early chapters, is a story of how much the early followers of Jesus experience the Spirit in action and come to rely on Him. St. Paul constantly gives the Spirit credit for everyday decisions on where to go, who to talk to, and how long to stay. He gets it – totally.

So what’s “wrong” with the baptism of the Samaritans in the first reading? Nothing really – it was simply incomplete. They had been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and...that’s it. Peter and John went down to Samaria to complete the Revelation, to show them the open door to the divine dance, to introduce them to the Holy Spirit. This reading is often

used as a justification for separating Confirmation from Baptism, emphasizing the reception of the fullness of the Spirit when the young Christian is ready for it. It also shows the budding realization of the importance of the apostolic witnesses, of how the laying on of hands by the apostles was a critically important gesture. Ordination uses the same gesture, by the way, thereby tying every clergy person today back to an original apostle.

If you've gotten a taste of the joy and happiness of the divine dance and want more, what to do? Get closer to Jesus. I can't emphasize that enough. Jesus says to "obey my commands," which doesn't sound like an invitation as much as a directive, but that's a language problem. To obey the commands of Jesus is to be open to the dialogue, to listen and read and ponder and pray on what Jesus is nudging you to do. The dialogue is different for each of us. The common thread is love, that's a given. Jesus is always encouraging us to love our fellow human beings more, to forgive them, to laugh at silly misunderstandings, to bolster the weak-kneed, to reach out to those who have fallen in the ditch. Yes, even to wear those uncomfortable masks outside and say nice things to grocery clerks and police and life guards and to our spouses. You can do it – just a little love, even if with gritted teeth, still counts.

There's something happening here, and what it is may be a *little* more clear! I hope so!