

Reflection for Wednesday May 20th **by Colleen Clayton**

Collect for the Sixth Sunday of Easter

Eternal God,
whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life:
grant that we may walk in his way, rejoice in his truth, and
share his risen life;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Gospel: John 16:16-24

Jesus said,

¹⁶ 'A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me.' ¹⁷ Then some of his disciples said to one another, 'What does he mean by saying to us, "A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me"; and "Because I am going to the Father"?' ¹⁸ They said, 'What does he mean by this "a little while"? We do not know what he is talking about.' ¹⁹ Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, 'Are you discussing among yourselves what I meant when I said, "A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me"? ²⁰ Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. ²¹ When a woman is in labour, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. ²² So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. ²³ On that day you will ask nothing of me. ^[a] Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. ^[b] ²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

Reflection

Jesus speaks to his disciples about the pain of childbirth, saying that when a woman is in labour she is in pain but that after her baby is born, she forgets about the pain because of the joy of bringing a new life into the world.

Jesus wants them to understand that when they no longer see him, after his crucifixion, and they are in the midst of confusion, loss, and grief, that is not the end of the story. His death will bring about new birth for them. When they see him again, they will understand, and they will forget their earlier pain in the joy and hope of new life through his resurrection.

We all face loss, pain, and confusion in life. Being a Christian does not save us from the suffering that is part of human life. Sometimes, despite our prayers, despite our faith, despite everything, life hurts us, and we can be left feeling overwhelmed by sorrow, abandoned by God.

And we are not alone in that. Despite Jesus telling his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem to die, they could not understand it. It was impossible for them to imagine a Messiah who would behave so differently from their expectations.

Sometimes life does not go the way we expect it to, or the way we think it should. Sometimes we feel deep confusion and pain. We might even feel abandoned by God. Sometimes our faith does not give us the answers we are looking for. Sometimes it can seem to make life even more confusing and complicated.

There is nothing un-spiritual about feeling this way. But Jesus promises that, even though it doesn't feel like it, the day is coming when we will see him and when we will experience the gift of God's joy that cannot be taken away from us.

In this life, we will ever escape the pain that goes with being human, so we don't need to try to brush aside our pain or pretend that it isn't real. Instead, like a woman in labour, we can breathe through the pain, remembering that God promises us new life, an unending joy and hope that nothing can take away.