

There is a verse from our first reading from Acts that states the answer to every preacher's dreams. When the apostle Philip travels to Samaria, Luke tells us, "With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip..." As I come down from imagining how nice that would be, I am brought back to reality by a verse from our second reading from 1 Peter: "Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope..."

As I write this, the nightly news has been filled with reports from Joplin, Missouri, and the devastation there caused by a powerful tornado. People are still recovering from floods along the Mississippi River, as well as from tornadoes that ripped through the South. This is not to mention the rebuilding still going on in Japan and in Haiti. And in other parts of the world there are people still engulfed in war and civil strife.

Especially in times like these, we need to offer an explanation for our hope. And our hope does not rest on us. Thanks be to God! Our hope instead rests on what we have been celebrating now for several weeks: the Resurrection of Jesus Christ for our salvation. In our Gospel reading from John, Jesus tells His disciples at the Last Supper: "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live." It may be hard for people grieving the loss of a loved one or sifting through the wreckage of their homes to be able to see Jesus, but our faith tells us that Jesus does indeed live, for He is risen just as He said! Perhaps the challenge for us is to reach out to those in sorrow and grief, so that they can see Jesus in *us*.

Reaching out to those in need is a way for us to keep Jesus' commandments and demonstrate our love for Him. When we observe His commandments, Jesus promises us that He will reveal Himself to us. The more we share the love of God in Jesus Christ with others, the closer we come to Jesus, and the more we understand what He asks of us. The more we feel Jesus' presence in our lives, the more we can have peace, even in the midst of chaos, and the more we can share our hope. This, of course, does not come from us. Philip did the signs he did in Samaria not by his own power, but by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within him.

The Holy Spirit has been given to us! Jesus has shown His love for us over and over and over again! What is the reason for our hope? It is not what, but Who. Jesus is the reason for our hope, and in Him we can bring hope to the world.

May God continue to bless us all, and may people find hope in Jesus through us.

In Christ,

Fr. Phil, CP