

*Justice is meant only not to see
not to not breathe.*

Today, we see Jesus coming into the Upper Room of his disciples. They are gathered isolated, fearful and in mourning. They see that their religious leaders and their government, put Jesus, the one they called Lord, to death. Not only death, they murdered him!

But he returns to them and breathes on them to give them a common mission that can be easily summarized: to spread peace, justice and reconciliation.

The power of the Spirit provides them, as we hear in our second reading from the Corinthians, with gifts helps them to become one body, helps them to spread, if you will, unity amidst diversity. We see that manifested in our first reading from Acts: they speak in many tongues yet all understand.

This power comes through breath. We are reminded of Genesis and how in the story of creation God breathed into the nostrils of God's earth person – Adam – to give life (Gn 2:7). Here Jesus breathes on them to give them new life, the new life in the Spirit and a mission.

As imitators of Christ, however, we are not now to breathe on one another literally. For our breath in this time in our history has the potential to spread disease and death. And Jesus came to spread healing and life. So too we.

But what are we seeing: a virus that suffocates and more often than we care to imagine humans suffocating one another literally and in many other ways.

Who among us has not heard the name George Floyd this week as he and his pleas – I can't breathe. We've seen the video. It is etched into our consciousness.

Perhaps some will turn this You Tube right off at this point when I say that what we witnessed was nothing other than an act of racism – another racist murder in a series of racist murders.

Blind justice? Not in the least. Many do not get that privilege.

And so we are seeing in response what Fr. Bob Daily whom I've mentioned in homilies before – a gentle, senior member and theologian in our community – described as an uprising against racism.

We would see neither the murder of George Floyd or the uprising if we really had an openness to the Spirit, if the Gospel message, if religion really took hold. We were lamenting in our dining room one night and Jim Beurnauer, a Jesuit philosophy professor, who joked that he never gets a shout out in my homilies – well here it is – said I guess religion just doesn't transform people adequately enough. And Fr. Frank Herman, a Jesuit criminal attorney, said yes – a sheer veneer.

That realization can cause us to be discouraged. Our current events can certainly cause us discouragement. But we know there is hope.

Justice may be blind, but our God is not. God's is not blind to the evils of white supremacy or white privilege. God is not blind to racism and bigotry, God is not blind to gross financial inequities, and God does not lump all police officers together. Instead God never ceases to see that all creation is interconnected.

And so our Mission, on this Pentecost Sunday, we who are sealed in the Spirit must be to discern when we should keep our blindfold on in acts of non-discriminatory justice, and when we should take them off, so that all can breathe.