

## Gospel of John - episode 29

### Chapter 14 part 3

Welcome to our Reflection on chapter 14: from verse 12 of John's Gospel. Jesus said, "whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself. He will perform even greater works when I go to the Father. And whatever you ask for in my name, I will do it, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it". Let's take the first statement: 'whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself'. Jesus' humility is extraordinary. As we proceed in the text, his humility becomes greater and greater. For me, it's inexplicable. Why should he humble himself so much? Why should he be so small in front of us? We are nobodies. Here he offers his disciples not only the same mission as himself, but also that 'you will do the same works as I do', and he meant it!

In the Acts of the Apostles, you find Peter and John healing a lame man outside the temple. You also find Peter raising the dead. You find Paul and all the others working miracles also. It's incredible. They stand up as other Christs. Here you have Jesus handing over everything to them, but he says something that is almost inexplicable. "You will perform even greater works than I did". How on Earth could a disciple do a greater work than Jesus? The answer is because "I will be by the Father's side and I will be interceding for you", Hebrews 7:25. There is no limit to what can be done if Jesus is standing by the Father's side and the Father is the Creator, Jesus is the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier of the universe. If the Three in One are on our side, what is there to limit us? There is only our blindness, unbelief and the lack of understanding we see in the Apostles listening to Jesus – which is in us also. That is what limits us. I've even heard people say, 'but God wouldn't do it through me. You would have to be very holy'.

Who said so? Jesus is generosity personified. He is trying to convince them: 'I'm giving everything to you'. I've always been fascinated by a particular statement in the Book of Revelation, where Jesus promises that "if you overcome I will let you share my throne". Have you ever heard of anyone who would want to share their throne with anybody else? Jesus wants them to understand that they will be other Christs upon the Earth. Just as the Father sent him with all authority and power, Jesus is sending them with all authority and power also. They need to grasp that he is forming a new temple in them, and that the Blessed Trinity will be working in this temple to reach out to the world in all future generations. So, if the church was lacking something that Jesus had, it wouldn't be able to accomplish its mission the way Jesus wanted her to accomplish it. The gift which Jesus gives is his whole self, his whole being. Just as Jesus' works were those of the Father, so the disciples will find that their works are the works of Jesus!

In Ephesians 4:7-16, Paul talks about this, "to some, he appointed to be Apostles and others" to be this or that .... but we are all one. We make up one body, and we make up one great mission doing different things in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. But It is Jesus' mission that is continued upon the Earth. It's the living faith that comes from this personal, intimate relationship with the Father through Jesus in the Holy Spirit that I've already spoken about, that's going to let those mighty works be done. Now, we've seen some of the saints down through history. They were brave enough to let these works come through them. Some of us are not so brave, which is sad, because it is holding us back. It's

not him holding us back. He has given everything. The works that the body of believers do will glorify Jesus, just as Jesus's works glorified the Father. What does 'glorify' mean? It means that these works will manifest who Jesus really is, just as Jesus' works revealed who the Father was. We don't use a worldly term there. Jesus had the privilege and the responsibility to try and recreate Heaven in the human heart and that is exactly what the beloved disciples will have to do also.

They can't do it on their own. In John 15:5 Jesus says, "without me, you can do nothing". That's why everything depends on this intimate relationship that the disciples have with the Lord. In Mark 16:17-18, you get an extraordinary statement - when the church went out on its mission, "Jesus was working with them". In the Acts of the Apostles, you see the early church taking its first steps and it is clear that Jesus is working with them. It's marvellous to see it. Doing the works of Jesus is challenging, particularly when you remember that in chapter 13 we learned that we must love in the same way as Jesus loved.

These works will only come through us if divine love comes through us - that is the unconditional, sacrificial love that Jesus had. If it is that love, yes, there will be great works, so, a vibrant, live, fruitful prayer life is required. That's absolutely basic. I'm going to keep repeating this until we, including myself, hear it. It is communion with the Father through Jesus. It is that union which gives us answered prayer. So let me read that about answered prayer again. "Whatever you ask in my name"; this is misunderstood. People say, 'I asked in the name of Jesus'. You mean you used a formula? In the name of Jesus means in the person of Jesus. The name means the person. You need to think the way the Bible actually communicates. So, to pray 'in the name' is to pray in the person of Jesus. You have to be in communion with the Father through Jesus for the prayer to be heard. If we are living in union with Them, our requests will reflect God's Will, and they will be answered.

So, what will this community be asking for? It will be asking for everything we have dealt with in the first half of the Gospel: Word, life, light, bread, living water, everything that the world needs. In other Words, we will be interceding for the salvation of the world, and for the living waters of grace to get through to them. The idea of making an unworthy request is unthinkable. An unworthy request is something for me, something that I want for myself, something small and narrow, whereas Jesus thinks of the whole of humanity in his gift of himself. The church must think of the whole of humanity also. The bride must take all of her children back to Heaven with her. We must think big, universally. I believe that if you want to find out if you yourself are living in union with God, just ask yourself, is your prayer universal? Do you embrace all people? Because that is exactly what the Will of God is, that we will embrace them all. The mission to all the world, therefore, has to be powered by the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will do that through our union with God and our prayer life Cf 1Tim 2:4.

In this communion with the Blessed Trinity, each one of these beloved disciples will be gradually transformed into the image of the Son. Romans 8:29 says that we are called to become images of the Son. We are not images when we start out because there's so much in us that needs to be purified and cleansed. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says that we are transformed into the image that we reflect. That means that if we are contemplating Christ in all these mysteries in our prayer life, we will gradually be transformed into Christ, but if there is no vibrant prayer life, there's nothing there to work with. It's actually that simple.

When we come to chapter 15, we will discover that some branches of the vine dry up and are cut off. That's the prayer life which has dried up. The connexion with God is gone, and you become a useless branch.

If we ask the question how would you recognise a beloved disciple of Jesus? The answer begins to be given in 14:15. Jesus said, "if you love me, you will keep my Commandments". (The 'if' clause is terribly important: 'if you love me'). I shall ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to be with you forever. He is that Spirit of Truth whom the world will never receive, since it neither sees nor knows him; but you know him because he is with you and he is in you". There is a lot there. Let's go back to the initial one: "if you love me, you will keep my Commandments". We've already said in chapter 13 that Jesus gave one command, so that one command was that "you love one another in the same way as I love you". So why is he saying Commandments here? He's talking about the whole revelation of his Word that we must take in; that Word is given to us in the Gospels, but we must interiorize it. We must let it take root in us, let it to become our lives. We must become a little Word of God ourselves.

The test for recognising a beloved disciple is obedience to God's Will and God's Word, exactly as you saw in the first half of the Gospel with Jesus. We will soon read in 14:31, "I want the world to know that I love the Father, and therefore I do exactly what my Father tells me". This exact obedience to the Will of God. Jesus was determined that every jot and tittle of God's Word would be accomplished in him and through him. That is the sign of a beloved disciple, and of the saints also.

When we come to chapter 20 - just to give you a little preview – when you see one of the greatest lovers of Jesus, Mary of Magdalen, throw herself at the feet of Jesus, he indicates to her that in the new life that has begun on Easter Day that love is shown through obedience to the Word of God, so, he gives her a command that she must accomplish. It must have been extremely difficult for her to get up from the ground where she was adoring him, to get up and do what he asked. Our love for God is nothing to do with feelings, nothing to do with feel good or anything else in prayer. It's to do with the fact that we will accomplish God's Will under any circumstances.

So, in chapter 14:1-14, there is a plea from Jesus, "believe in me". From 14:15-24, his plea turns to, "love me". You see, we won't love him unless we believe in him. Our love for him is to be shown in our total surrender to God's Will and to God's Word. So, he is reminding us that in Deuteronomy 6:4-10, God asked exclusive love from the people he had redeemed from Egypt. He found them in slavery; He did everything to release them from slavery, and then he asked of them exclusive love. That is the Shema Israel. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your being".

Notice the ALL. God is not saying to us, Keep 10% for yourself, for indulging yourself, and give 90% to Me. That's no use at all because the power of God would be lost through that 10%, and you would gradually give-in more and more to the self and surrender less to God. That is what today's society is doing and has been doing for quite some time; as self-indulgence increases they move further away from the Will of God with the consequences that it will bring on. This command given by God to the chosen



people at the time of the Exodus is now given by Jesus to us in the Farewell Discourse. So, if you love me, the sign will be that you will live it. Keeping the Commandments means to internalise the Will of God and action it out of love for him. 'I might not like what I'm doing at the moment, but I'll do it for love of you'.

The command is an invitation to love and to show your love for him. Doing the Will of God may be difficult but the sacrifice of laying down the self to do God's Will is extremely pleasing to God. The more we sacrifice our self-will for God's Will, the more the love of God rises in our souls so that gradually it becomes triumphant, and the Will of God triumphs over the human will, which is what God wants. When the Will of God triumphs over the human will, God reigns in you, and through you He can reach out to reign in others. The power that you have to touch other people's lives and to let God reach them becomes greater as you lay down the human will before the Divine Will. It's the great sacrifice that He wants from us. The new community that Jesus is forming through the Apostles are to be like himself, living only to accomplish the Will of God on Earth.

Now, they will need help. Jesus had two natures, one divine and one human, so he had the Hypostatic Union all the time. We are very weak, poor, broken creatures, needing everything that Jesus could do for us in Redemption. So, Jesus said, "I will give you another helper. I will give you an advocate". Now, an advocate is one who defends you in court. Why would he say that the Holy Spirit was going to, first of all, have the office of advocate? Because there was going to be a continuous battle going on inside of us. The Holy Spirit has to defend you against yourself. He also must enlighten you with regard to issues when it comes to self-will vs Divine Will. So, He enlightens you, but He is on the side of Divine Will. When we go out to witness to Christ in the world, the Holy Spirit is our defender. The Synoptic Gospels inform us that when you are brought before magistrates and when you are brought before councils to witness to Christ, that you must not worry because the Holy Spirit will inspire you what to say. It is the one time when we're guaranteed to be inspired.

So, the Holy Spirit will be the One who will defend us against ourselves, against the world and also against the evil one. Because the Holy Spirit is the Enlightener, He is the one therefore, who lets you see the issues. The more you enter into communion with God, the more the Holy Spirit can enlighten you. One of the things that fascinates me about people who are very close to God is that if they are in a situation where people are in conflict, they go right to the core and see what the true issue is. They can bypass the human arguments to get to the truth. This is illustrated in the Acts when Peter and John stood before the Sanhedrin who were persecuting them. They had healed a man at the golden gate of the temple. The Sanhedrin accuse them of various things. Peter puts all that aside, listens to the Holy Spirit, and then he says, "if you are putting us on trial for an act of kindness to a cripple" then things are really bad! Right to the core!

It's marvellous. The natural man, Simon, would have argued with them and defended himself. The Holy Spirit says, 'No, It's the cripple!' The Sanhedrin had nothing to say to that! We need the Holy Spirit very badly. Thank you for listening.. Goodbye. God bless you.



## **INTERVAL**

Welcome to our Reflections on John's Gospel. I want to pick up in chapter 14:16-17 where Jesus speaks about the gift of the Holy Spirit: "He said, I shall ask the Father, and he will send you another advocate, who will be with you forever. He is that Spirit of Truth whom the world can never receive since it cannot either see or know him". There's a huge amount of material in that statement. First of all, Jesus is going to leave them physically, and this will be a huge crisis for the Apostles. They have never had to have a day without Jesus before, so, Jesus must communicate to them that it is actually better that he goes. He will say that a few verses further on, but he must explain why it's better for him to go. Everything that they've known up to this moment as normal in their ministry with Jesus, is over, it's finished.

There will be traumatic events in the next 24 hours. Then when Jesus rises from the dead, there will be a new normal. This new normal will include Jesus going back to the Father. As the Beloved Son of the Father, as the Messiah, as the Christ, and as the Redeemer, he will ask that the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity to descend upon the Earth. Now, I've said to you before that we associate the time of the Old Testament with the mission of the Father, the time of the Gospel with the mission of the Son, and the time of the Church with the mission of the Holy Spirit. You can't separate Them because they are three Persons in One God.

But at the same time, there is a movement. The Father sent his Son, and now the Son is going to send the Holy Spirit. This is terribly important. It is the Holy Spirit who will be the One who indwells them. Jesus has been living outside of his beloved disciples because, naturally, he was in the flesh. So now they have to take on board a completely different type of relationship, where the Holy Spirit will be their internal teacher and guide. It will seem on the outside that they have been abandoned by Jesus. He's gone, but they will be as much alone with Jesus in Heaven as Jesus was alone on the Earth, because Jesus said, 'I'm not alone. The Father is with me'. They will discover very soon that they are not alone either because Jesus is with them and his Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, is indwelling them. The new community of the beloved disciples will be on trial from day one before the Sanhedrin, before the people of Israel and when they travel the world, just as Jesus was on trial before the Sanhedrin and before the people of Israel during his ministry.

As I've said to you before, Jesus is passing on his entire mission to them, so, they need an internal teacher. Jesus is divine as well as human, so, his teacher was within. He had the Hypostatic Union. The church cannot go forward unless it has an internal teacher. It can't do it alone. It wouldn't have the power or the understanding. It would have nothing, but having the Holy Spirit inside of the hearts of the believers as the internal teacher and guide and also the defence lawyer she can go forward in her mission. Earlier Jesus said "he is with you; he is in you". Why is he able to say that here in chapter 14, just before his Passion? It is because John is writing at the end of the first century, and what Jesus said to them the night before his Passion is now a reality in the church since the time of Pentecost. So, Jesus speaking before he died and the reality is now the church's everyday experience.

Up to this moment, before the Passion, the Apostles were protected and defended by Jesus. I'm not sure if they were even aware of it, but he made sure they didn't get into any trouble with the Sanhedrin or with the Romans. They were his fledgling Apostles, so, he protected them like a mother hen, as he described himself, having his chicks under of his wings. He protected them while he was on the Earth, but when he returns to the Father, somebody must protect them because they will be very vulnerable in the world where the vast majority are unbelievers and sinners under the influence of the prince of this world. So, the Holy Spirit will continue to defend them and protect them from within. When they have to face the world, the Holy Spirit will defend them also. There's a beautiful statement in Acts Chapter 15, at the end of the first major Council of the Church, when the Apostles write their first encyclical letter. They say, "the Holy Spirit and we agree". I think it's great that they are able to say that with such clarity. They are so aware of the Holy Spirit being within, guiding and directing them.

In 14:18 Jesus says to them, "I will not leave you orphans". An orphan is someone without father or mother. For the Apostles, the beloved disciples and the community that Jesus is founding, that would mean you are not left without God, the Father, and without your Redeemer. But Jesus says, 'you will have US All! We will be with you much more than we were able to be with you before'. In other Words, Jesus says "you will gain more by my physical absence than if I stayed with you, because if I stay with you, I can't send the Holy Spirit, and I can't give you that gift which will make all the difference to you as an individual and as a community, so, I have to go. It's for your good. Later on, in 14:28 Jesus says, "I'm going away and I shall return. If you love me, you would be glad that I'm going back to the Father". Jesus says "if you really had grasped all that I'm saying, you would be glad", but of course, they don't grasp it at this particular point.

But before we get to that point, this gift, this inflow of the Holy Spirit, it's not open to everybody. It's only open to those who open themselves up to God and allow this inflow of Grace and the glory of God into their lives. So, while God makes no distinction between one person and another, we make the decision as to whether we cooperate or not. That's entirely on our side, because of our own free will. The unbelieving world, Jesus says, will never know the Holy Spirit. That's a very powerful statement. They will never know. The unbelieving world, which John calls the Cosmos are those human beings who are closed off from God. They don't want to see; they don't want to hear; they don't want to change their hearts; they don't want to have anything to do with God, therefore they cannot know the Holy Spirit, because only those who open up and allow Jesus to be their Saviour and Redeemer can receive the Holy Spirit, so, if the Holy Spirit doesn't come to an individual, it's their own choice.

Now, if the world cannot know or see the Holy Spirit, then the church will always have a difficult time with it because, with her message there will always be contention. The world cannot understand if it doesn't have the Holy Spirit. So, this statement of Jesus prepares us for chapter 16 and the difficulties that are coming. The unbelieving world has left itself blind, and in darkness. It has not converted. It has left itself under the influence of the prince of this world, and therefore, It's going in the opposite direction to the community of the beloved disciples of Jesus. So, it's extremely important that Jesus is able to explain that they are not going to be alone because they wouldn't be able to survive the world's angry, aggressive reaction.



In 14:18, Jesus says, "I will come back to you." That's interesting. Now, we've already dealt with Jesus's return in the Parousia, but Jesus is talking about coming back to his disciples! It took them some time - I would imagine at least months - because it would be after the coming of the Holy Spirit - for them to realise that Jesus comes to us in different ways, and we must get used to this. We hardly register it, so, let's look at them: 1): Jesus was going to come back to this 11 disciples and some other people who chosen to be his personal witnesses to the Resurrection. He was going to come back to them in Resurrection appearances. They would physically see him again. The disciples were going to eat and drink in his Presence, and he was going to eat and drink in theirs. That was necessary as evidence for the rest of the world for all time to ensure that we realised that Jesus did, in fact, rise from the dead.

2): As soon as the church gathered for Peter to offer his first Mass and consecrate the bread and the wine for the first time, they began to realise that Jesus comes to us every time we celebrate Eucharist. Jesus is available to us in his Eucharistic Presence in our tabernacles, and of course, in the church all over the world. Of course, unbelievers don't get that, so they don't appreciate it. 3): Jesus comes to each individual in their mutual indwelling in the personal relationship that I have been emphasising for so long now in the last number of sessions. It is essential for us to have this vibrant personal prayer life, which enables us to touch the very source of life where Jesus says, "I will come to them and I will manifest or reveal myself to them". At this stage in the Church's history, we have the testimony of so many people to whom Jesus has revealed himself in spectacular ways. No one has the same testimony, but the church has a lot of evidence that Jesus does that. Then, of course, we have the final coming in the Parousia.

Here is 14:20, "On that day". Now, usually in the bible, that day refers to the day of judgement, but this is an exception because Jesus is talking about when the community of the beloved disciples are operating as his church and continuing his mission. So 'that day' is after the Resurrection, when the New Era begins. "when that day comes, he said, you will understand" Why? Because the Holy Spirit is guiding us, and we are experiencing Jesus in the Eucharist, in his Holy Word, and in our own personal communion with God. "You will understand that I am in the Father and that you are in me and I am in you". Now, what makes us understand that Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Jesus - which we were told throughout the whole of the first half of John's Gospel - when we move into living in union with Jesus, and he is in us, then we will understand. That will give us much more authority to reach out to others. Jesus is trying to explain the nature of this indwelling. He tells us that when the door closes on Jesus' physical life in death, the door opens again in the Resurrection and opens fully at Pentecost so that we can pick up where Jesus wants us to pick up and continue his ministry on Earth.

What appears to be a closing, now we discover, is an opening. So, you have to ask the question, where is his tabernacle? Now, unfortunately, in the 21st first century, people would say, Oh, in the church, but that wasn't his intention. The tabernacle is the heart that is in communion with God. It's our own self: 1 Corinthians 3:16, "know you not that you are the temple of the living God, and that the Spirit of God is dwelling within you?" Luke 17:21, "the Kingdom of God is within you". It is in the hearts of the people that Jesus wants to dwell. Jesus is the King of Love, and as such wants to live in our hearts. A dead tabernacle made of metal or wood is not where he wants to be. He wants to be in us, in the living

tabernacles. When you add all of these living tabernacles together, that constitutes what we call the Church.

St Peter and other teachers in the New Testament slightly change the image; they say that we are living stones making up the living temple because they are trying to get us into the image of a building. The temple in Jerusalem was a physical building but we are living temples. Every person in the church is an essential part, and the Lord wants to dwell in them; the Spirit of God indwells each one. Therefore, what you have in this great mystery is the interflow of love between Heaven and Earth. Heaven and Earth are now connected because Jesus came down to the Earth. He lowered himself in the incarnation in order to raise us up, to divinize us, and now that he has sent the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to live this new life in Christ. When you look at the fact that each individual is a living tabernacle and all of us added together make up what we call the Mystical Body of Christ, then the mystery which was hidden from eternity is revealed. That mystery is the Mystical Body of Christ. When Jesus leaves the Earth, he leaves his own Mystical Body behind. He is the only person who ever walked this Earth who was able to leave a Mystical Body behind him! Nobody else, no other claimant to being a founder of religion, had even such an idea in their heads.

It never crossed anybody's mind that such a thing was possible yet Jesus accomplished it, and very simply. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, for example speaks about this eloquently. I'll let you read that for yourself. But this is the mystery that's been hidden from all eternity. Who would have believed that I, as an individual, would be a living tabernacle of the Most High? That I would be the temple of God? If you understand that each of us is a living tabernacle then you will understand that the church is indestructible, because to destroy the church, they would have to kill every single person who is baptised, everyone who has the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. They would have to massacre billions of people. They might try, but they won't succeed. Jesus' plan for his church is absolutely brilliant. Not only that, but he said in Matthew's Gospel, "where two of you gather together, I am there" as your number three. That will be a trinity on the Earth. So, even if the physical buildings are destroyed and a fierce persecution takes place, even if there are only two left, we have the trinity on Earth!

What an incredible mystery! What a marvellous plan that the Lord has. Now, all down the centuries, various governments have tried to wipe out the Church. They've never succeeded. Even when they kill an enormous number of people, all they do is make martyrs whose blood strengthens the Church in the next generation.

So, I'll leave you to think about this wonderful mystery of the Body of Christ.

Thank you for listening. Goodbye. God bless you.