



Daily Reflection

May 8, 2018

Scripture

John 16: 5-11

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Now I am going to the one who sent me,
and not one of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'
But because I told you this, grief has filled your hearts.
But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go.
For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you.
But if I go, I will send him to you.

And when he comes he will convict the world
in regard to sin and righteousness and condemnation:
sin, because they do not believe in me;
righteousness, because I am going to the Father
and you will no longer see me;
condemnation, because the ruler of this world has been condemned."

Our Scripture Reflection

It was God's plan that Jesus after the resurrection would ascend to the right hand of the Father and He would send the Advocate or Holy Spirit upon the Church. The purpose of the Holy Spirit? To be the abiding presence of Jesus in the world to teach and to remind the disciples about Jesus and His Gospel and to strengthen and guide the Church in its mission.

Food for your Journey

Alvah Dunning, known as "the Hermit Guide of Raquette Lake," was the most colorful of the famed Adirondack Guides of the 19th century. Wealthy young men from the cities, known as "sports," would hire wise old locals like him to lead them to the best hunting and fishing spots and teach them the ways of the wilderness.

Dunning, who lived alone in the woods when he wasn't guiding a hunting or fishing party, had a reputation for eccentricity, even cantankerousness. City folk kept seeking him out, anyway, because when it came to knowledge of the woods, Dunning had no peer.

He didn't always fit well into human society, as one contemporary observer pointed out:

"He lived in the woods all of the time, and for the most part alone. The human voice was less familiar to him than the noises of birds and animals, and he often seemed able to understand and speak their language. He could lure the timid mink from its hole by imitative chipping, and trick a frightened deer back to the water's edge by deceptive bleating with his throat and splashing with his hands."

That didn't mean Dunning was an expert on everything. One day, when one of the sports he was guiding through the woods mentioned something about the world being round, he was incredulous. For quite some time after that, Dunning tried to entertain his other clients with the ridiculous story of the man who thought the world was round, but he was even more surprised that no one else thought it funny. Finally, he just filled a cup with water and turned it upside down, pouring its contents onto the forest floor. "Ain't that what would happen to yer lakes and rivers if yer turned 'em upside down? I ain't believin' no such tommyrot as that!"

Dunning died in Utica in 1902, while spending a rare night in a hotel on his way back from a sportsmen's show in New York City. He was asphyxiated by gas leaking from a lighting fixture in his room. There was nothing wrong with the fixture. It's just that when Dunning went to sleep, he blew the flame out, as one might blow out a candle or kerosene lantern, rather than turning off the gas supply.

Unlike this flawed human guide who demonstrated wildly uneven abilities, Scripture says the Holy Spirit "will guide you into all truth."

--Adapted from "Alvah Dunning, 1816-1902, The Hermit Guide. adirondackhistory.org/newguides/dunning.html.

A Prayer from the Heart

Holy Spirit of light and love, You are the substantial love of the Father and the Son; hear my prayer. Bounteous bestower of most precious gifts, grant me a strong and living faith which makes me accept all revealed truths and shape my conduct in accord with them. Give me a most confident hope in all Divine promises which prompts me to abandon myself unreservedly to You and Your guidance. Infuse into me a love of perfect goodwill, and act according to God's least desires. Make me love not only my friends but my enemies as well, in imitation of Jesus Christ who through You offered Himself on the Cross for all people. Holy Spirit, animate, inspire, and guide me, and help me to be always a true follower of You. Amen.