

## **Fifth Sunday of Easter – April 24, 2016**

Photographs and digital pictures. Most of us have them. Even if we give our photos or digital snapshots the “speed-by” treatment very often, sometime or other, for reasons unknown, we attend to one image and stop to ponder it – and we can find ourselves smiling or misty-eyed, or even downright laughing. And then, if we hunger for more and move from picture to picture, we can even be stunned by the total effect these photos have on us. We can be filled with the love we have received. Gifts we’ve known that have never been added up before. Gifts beyond measure. God’s gifts.

There are also crosses in our homes, apartments, and in our places of worship. We see these crosses every day, and most often they get the “speed-by” treatment as well. But every so often, we pause and remember. We all have a history with the cross.

I grew up in a small town in Connecticut in a Catholic neighborhood. The overriding religious story there was a popularized version of today’s gospel. It went like this: Jesus entered human life and died on the cross out of love for us. So we should not be afraid of death and we should learn to love one another. For many years this rehearsed religious story came to mind most times I looked at a cross. And in my neighborhood and school and home there were a lot of crosses to look at. But what is important is that it sunk in. It is a memory that had and still has an effect. I try, to “pay it forward”, to love others as I have been loved by Jesus.

But there’s even more depth to this story. The cross influences me because I belonged to a community of believers that carried the memory of Jesus through time and space so I could receive it. But they did more than carry the memory, they live it. When they went wrong, they confessed and began again. When people forgot the story of Jesus, there was someone around to encourage remembrance and engagement.

John’s Gospel, which we’ve heard today, invites us to bridge time. To contact Christ, we don’t have to throw ourselves back into the first century. We do have to belong to our present community of believers who remember Christ’s love and live that love. Contacting Christ Jesus is the issue.

The fact is we need both the Scriptures and the community of believers to remember the love of Jesus and to love another as he has loved us. But it is also wider and thicker than this. It is all the people in our photographs and digital pictures. Perhaps remembering the love of Jesus so we can love another as he loved us takes a home where photos of family and friends stand side by side with the cross.