

Fifth Sunday of Easter A/2017

The readings of this Sunday talk about the growth of the kingdom of God. They show that the expansion of the Church has brought various needs that it had to satisfy by instituting new ministries. They invite us to understand that the goal of our life is to share one day in the life of Jesus in the kingdom of God.

The first reading of the Acts talks about the problems raised by the entrance of the pagans into the Church. It describes the dissension between the Hellenists and the Jews over the distribution of food. It shows what the apostles did in order to remedy the situation by instituting the ministry of diaconate. It shows also the criteria they used in the process leading to the election of a deacon. The reading ends by mentioning that the number of the disciples increased substantially in Jerusalem.

What is behind this text is the idea that the Church is a body made up of many and different peoples, but who are all, in spite of their differences, one people. Another idea is that the organization of ministries is vital to the good functioning of the Church. The last idea is related to the truth that the existence of some ministries has been dictated by the needs of the people of God.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus speaks of his return to the Father. First of all, the Gospel reports the speech of Jesus about the many places that are in the house of his Father. It also talks about the assurance that Jesus gave to his disciples that he was going to his Father in order to prepare them a place and, then, to take them to him.

After that, the Gospel talks about the question Thomas and Phillip asked Jesus over the location where he was going and over his Father. It also gives Jesus' answer through which he identifies with his Father and his declaration that he is the way and the truth and the life.

Finally, the Gospel reports the words of Jesus claiming that he is in the Father and the Father is in him to the point that when one sees or knows him he sees and knows the Father. The Gospel ends up with Jesus' invitation to his disciples to believe in him, not only because of his word, but also because of the works he performs.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today I want to talk about the meaning of life in the light of Jesus' message. In fact, many people are in search for the meaning of life and its value. Many people want to know the reason why we exist and how the activities we perform on a daily basis give meaning to our life. Some others seek to understand the significance of human existence on earth and the purpose for which we live and pursue so many things in this world?

The answers to those questions differ certainly from one individual to another, from one culture to another, and according to the vision, the degree of belief and the priorities one sets for his life. That is why some find the meaning of life in love; others in earning money; some others in learning; still others in making the difference in the life of their fellows through helping and serving them, etc.

Without questioning those options or minimizing them, today's Gospel tells us that for Jesus, the meaning of life consists in having eternal life. In that sense, whatever we may do in this world and whatever might be our choice in the search for the meaning of life, everything should lead us to God.

In fact, God is the reason why we have been created and live in this world. If by the end of the day and through our multiple activities in the world, we can have eternal life and share in the resurrection of Jesus, we would have attained the goal of our life. That is why Jesus says clearly that we should live without trouble in our hearts and with the assurance that in his Father's house, there are many dwelling places.

Moreover, once he returns to the Father, he will come back to take us so that where he is we might be too. Such a vision sheds light on the sense of our life and clarifies the meaning of the reality of death. In fact, whatever might be the activities we perform in the world and the perception we have of the world, we cannot escape the reality of death. The possibility of death makes our activities in the world transitory and a preparation for the world to come. The access to that world to come, which corresponds to eternal life does not happen in an abstract way, but through our faith in Jesus. That is the reason why Jesus says he is the way and the truth and the life so that no one can go to the Father except through him.

Let us draw some consequences from this vision. First, it is true that we are all in search of a direction for our life and sometimes without knowing which one is the best for us. However, when we find Jesus, we have found our way. That is why through this statement, Jesus does not only give us advice about how we have to orientate our life, but he is assuring us that he is the direction, the way. If we accept to follow him, we will never get lost, but rather he will lead us to the purpose for which we have been created, that is, our eternal salvation.

Second. When it comes to the search for the meaning of life, different masters have told us many things as truth, but none of them has ever embodied the truth. Many could say, "I told you the truth". Only Jesus can say, "I am the truth", because he is the personification of the truth and to know him is to know the truth.

Third. There are many different forms of life according to the way people decide to live. In fact, people are free to lead their life the way they want with God or without him. However, living without Jesus is cutting our life of an important asset that makes it meaningful and worthwhile, because one lives not only for what is visible, but for eternal values. That is why Jesus says he is the life. In that sense, to know him is to truly live, and to lead a life without him is not life at all.

Why is Jesus so inevitable with regard to the meaning of our life? The reason is that because the Father is in him and he is in the Father. Therefore, to see him is to see the Father; to listen to him is listening to the Father and obeying him is obeying the Father who sent him and whose power is at work in him.

Let us pray today that God may bless all our mothers, dead and living. May the Blessed Mother Mary be their guide and consolation! God bless you all!.

Acts 6: 1-7; 1 Peter 2: 4-9; John 14: 1-12



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