

Fifth Sunday of Easter A/2020

I want to start this homily with the words of St Paul in Romans 8: 28: “We know that all things work for good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose”.

The truth of these words had been verified and made evident in the life of the early church. As a matter of fact, after the death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples had been persecuted and imprisoned because of their faith in Jesus. Many fled Israel and went abroad in order to find refuge in pagan lands.

But, as they were fleeing, the word of God was spreading wide with them to the point that many foreigners and pagans embraced the faith. That expansion, however, brought problems and conflicts into the Church.

The first reading of today shows what that conflict was. In fact, the Christians of Hellenist background complained against the Hebrews about the treatment reserved to their widows with regard to the distribution of food. How could not they receive the distribution of food in the same proportion with the Jews?

As the situation ran the risk of becoming scandalous, the apostles held a meeting in order to organize the service and ministry inside the community for the benefit of all. That led to the appointment of seven men whose task was to care for the necessities of the community. In that sense, the apostles could devote themselves exclusively to prayer and the ministry of the word.

From this text, we learn two things. First, the Church is made up of human beings and not of angels. In its long history, the Church has come to deal with the conflicts caused by envy, jealousy, injustice and misunderstandings among people of different cultural backgrounds. Instead of being scandalized by such a situation, we have to take it as normal. The conflicts among the members of the church make us aware of the sinfulness inherent to our human nature and the necessity of conversion.

The second thing we learn is that the Church is an organized body. When the apostles realized the risk of being consumed with numerous tasks at the expense of prayer and the preaching of the word, they discharged themselves of some of their authorities. Historically, this was the beginning of the diaconate ministry in the Church.

The distribution of ministries is important even today. It reminds us that we are differently gifted so that we might be at the service of one another for the consolidation of the body of Christ. We have to support each other and to work together, each according to his charisma, for the benefit of many inside the Church. The more we work together, the more we alleviate the burdens of one another, and especially of those whose task is prayer and the proclamation of the word.

By so doing, we show that though we are many and different, we are but one people of God, his Church. The Church is a temple of which the members are living stones, a people sharing in the royal priesthood of the Lord Jesus, a consecrated nation, a people God claims as his own. But the cornerstone that keeps all these living stones together is Jesus Christ.

Without Jesus, the Church loses its focus and its direction. Like a solitary brick is useless when it is not incorporated into a building, so is the life of a Christian without Jesus. To be Christian is to live in communion with others inside the Church, around Jesus. A solitary Christian is a lost Christian.

It is when we are together that we are strong. Christ is our cornerstone; he keeps us together so that we offer to his Father spiritual sacrifices acceptable to him. A sacrifice that pleases the Father is made up of a holy life, irreproachable and filled with deeds of love, peace and joy toward our fellows. Each one of us is called to offer up such a sacrifice to God. Each one of us is called to become 'by his baptism' a priest at the example of Jesus.

Such a vision helps us understand why Jesus is important for us, as we heard in Gospel. Jesus reassures us that in the house of his Father, there are many places. He goes in order to prepare us a place. After that, he will come back to take us so that where he is we might be with him.

Here lays our promise of heaven because it is there that we live forever with Jesus. As long as we remain faithful to him, we will share in his life. That means also that human death is not a pure perdition, but it opens us a possibility of living with Jesus in heaven. Heaven is where Jesus is.

Jesus tells us also that he is the way, the truth and the life. This is a strong statement that summarizes who Jesus is truly. We are all in search of direction in life, but when we find Jesus, we have found our way. In fact, Jesus does not only give us advice about our life or show us directions to take, but he is the way. He takes us by his hand and leads to the Father. He strengthens us and guides us personally every day so that we come to the purpose for which we have been created, that is, our eternal salvation.

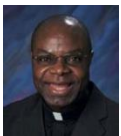
Many people have told us the truth; many teachers have taught us the truth about different things of life and the world, but none has embodied the truth. Many could say, I told you the truth. Only Jesus can say, "I am the truth". Jesus is the personification of the truth. To know Jesus is to know the truth.

When people fall in love, I hear them often say, "I never knew what life was until I met you or until I saw it in your eyes". In other words, love has brought life to the lover. That is exactly what Jesus does; he allows us to discover what life is. To know Jesus is to live truly. Life with Jesus is life indeed. Without Jesus, there is no life. Jesus is life.

How does it come that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life? Jesus is all that because the Father is in him and he is in the Father. Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father. For that reason, no one can come to the Father except through Jesus. Jesus alone is the way to God. In him alone we see what God is like; and he alone can lead us into God's presence without fear and without shame.

May Our Lord Jesus bless each one of you abundantly as we come together to praise him and worship him. As we struggle with Coronavirus, may Jesus heal us and our world! May Jesus allow us to praise and worship him as we have usually done for years! God bless you all!

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



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