

## Sixth Sunday of Easter A2023

I want to start the homily with these wonderful words of St Paul: "We know that all things work for good for those who love God" (Romans 8, 28). The truth of these words is evidenced in the first reading of today as it relates the events that happened in the early Church in the aftermath of Jesus' death and resurrection.

As the disciples were persecuted for preaching in the name of Jesus, many fled in the neighboring cities as far as Samaria. But, more they were running away, more they spreading the word of the Lord to the point that many people entered the Church to the great joy of the apostles in Jerusalem.

Thus, what was a sad event of persecution became an opportunity of blessing and grace for the church. What was true for the apostles in the past is also true even today. God can use any event of our life, as sad as it can be, and transform it into something good and beneficial to us. Sometimes when the event happens we are sad, crying and asking why God has abandoned us, and how he could allow such a bad thing happen to us. But with abandonment to the divine Providence and prayer, we can realize that God never left us. He was always with us, comforting us and encouraging us: the good has emerged from what was bad.

This permanent presence of our Lord in the Church and in our personal lives is something we have to deepen in our spirituality. We very often miss to understand the reality of the permanent presence of our Lord because we want to see with the eyes of our body than with the eyes of the heart. The first disciples, on the contrary, were so aware of the invisible presence of our Lord in their midst that they were convinced that any good they did was because the Lord was with them.

That helps grasp why before going to the Father our Lord promises not to leave them orphans. This is something that thanks to human experience we can easily understand. For instance, we know that when people live together, they end up being so accustomed that they become part of one another's life. Should one die or exists no more, the whole fabric of life is shaken and life itself becomes senseless.

This is the experience many couples do when they lose their spouses in death. Because of the reality of death, it is as though life has lost its meaning or any reason of being worthwhile. Such an experience can help us understand what was going in the mind of our Lord before his ascension to the Father. In fact, our Lord has loved totally and unconditionally his disciples. He taught them everything he received from his Father to the point that he did not count them as slaves, but rather as friends.

However, our Lord knew that he had to return to his Father in spite of all the love he bore for his disciples. In such a case, the sadness of the disciples would have been big to lose such a support and to face the challenge of mission alone. It is in that context that he promised not leave them orphans, but rather to ask the Father to send them another Advocate, the Spirit of truth, in order to be with them and assure them of his permanent presence.

In ordinary language, an "Advocate" means a helper, that is, someone called in order to help in time of need and trouble. It means also someone who supports, defends and promotes the interest of an individual. In modern terms, we would say that the Holy

Spirit is our lawyer. He is the one that our Lord leaves with us to defend us and tell us the truth that leads eternal salvation. The Holy Spirit takes away our inadequacies and enables us to cope with life in the footsteps of Jesus. He helps us be attentive to our Lord's commandments without which it would be difficult for us to walk in God's path.

Even if physically speaking we cannot see our Lord with the eyes of our body, he is present in our midst through the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we are not left alone with our problems and difficulties. In each problem we have face in this world, our Lord is with us in an invisible way. When sometimes we triumph over the difficulties of life, it is not because of our skills, talents or intelligence, but because of our Lord's help.

To live in good relationship with our Lord, we need to be obedient to him. I believe that it is the reason why our Lord talks about the importance of keeping the commandments as a condition for a true friendship with him and the reception of the Holy Spirit. Without keeping the commandment is like denying the friendship with our Lord. It is like a rebellious child who does not listen to his parents or respects them, but rather lives his life as it pleases him. His disobedience destroys his relationship with his parents. That is exactly what our Lord wants to say.

To keep our Lord's commandments reinforces our relationship with him. It manifests our love of him and our faithfulness to live by the teaching he has received from his Father. It is also for that reason that our Lord says that "whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him".

After all, the bottom line is the problem of love. As human experience teaches us, it is impossible to observe someone's precepts if we do not love him. The lack of love creates within us rejection and repulsion. The more we love someone, the easier we find the way to deal with what he is asking us. If we love our Lord, his Father will love us in turn and they will both dwell in us and fill us with the Holy Spirit. Let us, long, then, for the gift of the Holy Spirit so that we come to please God and walk in his paths. Let us ask the Lord Jesus to make us obedient to his commandments so that we live in him and he in us. May God bless you all!

**Acts 8: 5-8, 14-17; 1 Peter 3: 15-18; John 14: 15-21**



Homily Date: May 14, 2023  
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Document Name: 20230514homily