

Homily of Sixth Sunday of Easter of Year A

Saint Peter tells us in the second reading to “Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear...” Saint Peter was speaking to the early Christian community regarding how to defend their Christian faith and witness Christ. This piece of advice can help us in two ways: It teaches us an effective way to defend our faith as Christians; and how to witness Christ in daily life. Almost everywhere, there are people who, according to their personality type, play the role of “devil’s advocate” in about everything. Sometimes, they play this role without mischievous intentions. The role they play helps to keep us straight. They help us to be more organized. Such people act as our mirror. They help us to see areas we are blind to. They help us to see what we have neglected or not considered. To such people, we are to give explanation with gentleness and reverence and with clear conscience. There are, of course, people who ask questions with mischievous intentions. Even at that, we are still to give explanation with gentleness and reverence and with clear conscience. It is an integral part of human nature to be upset when we are doubted, or queried over our actions, especially if we consider that our actions were to the best of our ability and with the best intention. But according to an African proverb, “A clear conscience fears no accusation.”

In the first reading, in Samaria, Philip proclaimed the word of God. “With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip ... unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed people, and many paralyzed or crippled people were cured. There was great joy in that city.” It strikes me that, because the people with one accord, paid attention to the word of God, demons were being driven away, and many sick people were cured. If we don’t distract ourselves with paying attention to the words of people, but pay attention to the word of God with one accord, we will have the same experience: demons will be driven away and spiritual and physical sickness will be cured. Demons thrive and possess people where there is discord. They flee where there is one accord.

The Gospel has some consoling words for each one of us. Jesus says to us, “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you ... because I live and you will live.” An orphan is a child whose parents are dead. Such a child is unprotected and vulnerable to danger. Jesus is promising us that although we are vulnerable to danger in this world; we are to remain confident because “he’s got our back.” Jesus says, “I will give you an Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of Truth.” Jesus promises us the best spiritual attorney with minimal charge, and the charge is: we love him and observe the commandments. Jesus says that if we love him and obey his commandments, he will not only send us the Advocate, he will reveal himself to us. We know how we reveal ourselves to our loved ones. There is usually a flow of current between two lovers. Imagine such a special relationship with Jesus. Imagine the flow of current between Jesus and his loved ones. It is this flow of current between Jesus and his loved ones that makes his loved ones to bear much fruits that will last (John 15:16).

The second reading explains to us one of the ways to love Jesus, and that is paying attention to his word and doing what the word says. Saint James says that we should not be only hearers of the word, we should also be doers of the word (James 1:22). Lastly, to love Jesus is to love one another. Saint John reminds us that we cannot say that we love God whom we do not see, but hate one another whom we can see. We can only love God by loving one another (1 John 4:20-21).

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