

Homily of Sixth Sunday of Easter of Year A 2020

In this sixth Sunday of Easter, the readings draw our attention to the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. In a way, the readings are beginning to prepare us for Pentecost Sunday which we will celebrate in two weeks' time.

First reading: "Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who went down and prayed for them, that they might receive the holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the holy Spirit" (Acts 8:14-17).

Second Reading: "For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the spirit" (1 Peter 3:18).

Gospel: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth..." (John 14:15-17).

The Sixth Sunday invites us to spiritual renewal, that is like Jesus Christ, to be put to death in the flesh and to be alive in the spirit. Then, our actions will be guided by the Spirit of truth. It is true that despite the various Sacraments we have received, the Holy Spirit is inactive in many of us.

In the first reading, Philip proclaimed the word of God in Samaria. "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." We see that because the people with one accord, paid attention to God's word proclaimed by Philip, demons were driven away, and many sick people were cured. In the same way, if we are of one accord and if we pay attention to God's word we will have the same experience. Unclean spirits and spiritual paralyses will leave us and we will be delivered from many fears and anxieties that are crippling us. Are we of one accord? Do we pay attention to God's word? Does his word guide us?

It is not so much that Philip was 'a powerful man of God.' It was more the spiritual disposition of the people. Sometimes, this saying is true, "Whatever is received is received according to the manner of the receiver." Unfortunately, most times we are disunited, coupled with our lack of attention to God's word. Disunity and neglect of God's word render the Holy Spirit inactive in us. That is why St. Peter cautions us in the second reading, "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts."

The Gospel has some consoling words for us. Jesus says, "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. At this time, many of us are like orphans. Jesus is promising us that although we may be vulnerable to danger in this world, we are to believe in God and believe in him. The reward for our steadfastness is as Jesus promises, "I will give you an Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of Truth." The Holy Spirit is our spiritual attorney who leads us, guides us, directs us and intercedes for us. His only charges are, that we be of one accord, pay attention to God's word, and sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts.

Jesus says, "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." Jesus will reveal himself to us, as stated above, if we, of one accord, pay attention to God's word, and sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts. Jesus will reveal himself to us as the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). As the Way, he shows us the safe way; as the Truth, he guides us with his truth, and away from false truth; and as the Life, he renews, refreshes, and protects our life.

We conclude with the blessed assurance in the Gospel, "Because I live and you will live." The song by Gloria and William Gaither comes to mind:

***Because He lives, I can face tomorrow
Because He lives, all fear is gone
Because I know He holds the future
And life is worth a living just because He lives***

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