

Homily of Sixth Sunday of Easter Year C, 2022

Acts 15:1-2, 22-29; Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8; Revelation:10-14, 22-23; John 14:23-29

From its very beginning to the present, the Catholic Church convokes and holds various types of councils, synods, assemblies, and meetings to discuss important matters that affect the wellbeing of the Church and humanity, and make necessary decisions for going forward. The Council of Jerusalem, in the first reading, is the first of such Church gatherings. The reading tells us why the Council was convoked and held, and its outcome.

The Christian communities of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia were made up of Jewish and Gentile converts. The communities were in peace until some over-zealous preachers from Judea came over and contradicted Paul and Barnabas by instructing, "Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved." The dissension caused by this made the apostles and elders to meet in Jerusalem. After the meeting, the Council sent the following mandate to the Christian communities, "It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities, namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meat of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriages." The Council was not interested in mosaic circumcision of the foreskin, but spiritual circumcision of the heart and mind. The spiritual circumcision addressed by the Council can be summarized in the following words: refrain from idolatry and from sexual immorality. These were the major problems plaguing the Christian communities at that time.

This message is very relevant to us today, because as St. Paul writes in Romans 1:25, many people nowadays "exchange the truth about God for a lie, and worship and serve created things rather than the Creator." Idolatry is the worship of something or someone other than God as if it were God. A question that can help us in self-examination is, "How much attention do we pay to ourselves and worldly things, and how much attention do we pay to spiritual life and relationship with God? If we pay more attention to ourselves and worldly things than to God, we are, therefore, committing idolatry.

The high rate of sexual immorality in our world is a great concern. We know all kinds of sexual sins beleaguering our society and causing great harm to our society's sexual sacredness, sanity, and morality. Unfortunately, it appears our world seems to be at the mercy and spell of forces against sexual sacredness, sanity and morality. Let us not be among those under the spell of sexual evil forces. Parents and guardians have greater responsibility nowadays to guide their children to the right direction since young people are under siege from peer pressure, media, and ideologies that promote sexual recklessness and freedom.

Men from Judea came with their teaching which caused dissension, upset and disturbed the peace of mind of the Christian communities. There may be "men from Judea" in your life at the moment, causing dissension, upsetting and disturbing your peace of mind. Jesus knows this and he says to us, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid." The peace Jesus gives is the inner peace which makes us calm and strong in the face of "men from Judea's" discord, stress, dissension, upset, and disturbances. We pray with St. Francesca Xavier Cabrini, "Lord, fortify me with the grace of your Holy Spirit and give your peace to my soul that I may be free from all needless anxiety and worry." Amen.

On the other hand, let us not be "men from Judea" in other people's life. Rather, let us strive to become channels of God's peace by our words and actions. Let us pray with St. Paul, "Let the peace of Christ rule in [our] hearts, since as members of one body [we] were called to peace" (Colossians 3:15).

We conclude with praying the last part of the second reading (Revelation 21:23): O God, at the end of our earthly journey, admit us into the new holy city of Jerusalem, where there is no need of sun shine and moon light, for your glory gives light, and the Lamb is the lamp. Amen.

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