

## Homily of Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year A, 2026

**Acts 6:1-7; Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19; 1 Peter 2:4-9; John 14:1-12**

The first reading tells us about one of the problems the early Christian community encountered and how it was resolved. The early Christians comprised of the Hellenists and the Hebrews. The Hellenists were Greek speaking Jewish Christians, while the Hebrew Christians spoke Hebrew and/or Aramaic. The problem is stated in the first reading, “the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.” It obviously means that while the Hebrew widows received daily distribution, the Hellenist widows were neglected or ignored. No doubt, there were discrimination and partiality against the Hellenist widows. Do we have this kind of differential treatment at our homes, in our communities, in our churches, in our establishments, and so on?

It could be that the stewards who helped the apostles for the daily distribution was the problem. Therefore, the apostles addressed the Christian community, “It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table. Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task, whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. The proposal was acceptable to the whole community, so they chose Stephen, a man filled with faith and the Holy Spirit...” and other six men. “They presented these men to the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them.” This is the origin of the diaconate ministry.

Notice how the apostles took an immediate action to resolve the problem. They guided the community, “select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom.” The first among the men chosen was Stephen, “a man filled with faith and the Holy Spirit.” The selection was done by the community without any rancor and disagreements. Elections in various places at various levels are a far cry from this.

The men were selected because they were reputable men, filled with the Spirit, wisdom, and faith. These are the virtues we must see in people before we put them in positions of responsibility. Parents and all in shepherding responsibilities need to pray to have these virtues. Do we select (elect) reputable people, filled with the Spirit, wisdom, and faith, or is our selection (election) based on “it is my turn” imposition, power grabbing and snatching, which produce people of questionable characters to lead and rule? How then does anyone expect sanity?

In the gospel, Jesus tells us, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me” (John 14:1). He continues, “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). Let us bring our troubled hearts to him and have faith in him. In the second reading, St. Peter calls Jesus “a living stone,” and “a corner stone” who calls us “out of darkness into his wonderful light.” St. Peter assures us, “Whoever believes in [him] shall not be put to shame.”

Today’s Psalm, 33:18-19 assures us, “See, the eyes of the Lord are upon those who fear him, upon those who hope for his kindness, to deliver them from death and preserve them in spite of famine.”

In the gospel, Jesus says, “Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12). How can we perform “greater works” than Jesus? Is this possible? What message is Jesus communicating to us? Jesus lived for about 33 years and did his ministry for three years and only in Israel. But today, Christianity has reached every corner of the world and is the largest world religion. This is the “greater works” believers have done from the apostles to our time.

Greater works are mighty deeds in the name of Jesus that accompany believers and witnesses. Those who do greater works are those who, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). This command of Jesus must be understood in the context of a quote attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach the Gospel at all times; when necessary, use words."

A story:

There was a certain rabbi who the villagers believed that each morning Friday, he left the community and ascended to heaven to speak with God. A newcomer dismissed the story but decided to prove that the rabbi's story was merely a myth. He decided to keep watch on the rabbi. On Friday morning, the newcomer observed the rabbi woke up and reached for his axe. The axe was used to chop wood. Then, the rabbi brought a bundle of wood to a woman and her sick child who lived in a dilapidated shack in the poorest section of the town. The amount of wood would be enough for a week until the rabbi returns and replenishes the supply. The rabbi returned home and quietly resumed his duties. The newcomer witnessed all these with admiration. Later, when asked whether the rabbi actually rose to heaven each Friday morning to be with God, his simple answer was, "If not higher."

Napoleon Hill is quoted as have said, "If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way." St. Mother Teresa says, "Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love."

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