

Homily of Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year C, 2025

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

The central belief of the doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity is that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are equal. How then does Jesus say in today's gospel, "... the Father is greater than I"? A simple explanation is that Jesus is fully divine and fully human. In his human nature, God the Father is greater. In his divine nature as God the Son, he is equal to God the Father.

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's 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 genital circumcision, 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. Idolatry and sexual immorality are sins against the First Commandment, the Sixth Commandment, and the Ninth Commandment.

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 the thing or the person were God. A question that can help us in self-examination is, "How much attention do we pay to ourselves, or someone else, or worldly things, and how much attention do we pay to spiritual life and relationship with God? If we pay more attention to ourselves, or to someone, or to worldly things than to God, we are, therefore, committing the sin of 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. Sadly, one can say that Satan is on the rampage and our world 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 in the right direction since young people are under siege from peer pressure, media, and ideologies that promote highly disgusting sexual recklessness.

The people who came from Judea with their contradicting instructions caused dissension, upset, and disturbed the peace of the Christian communities. There may be “people from Judea” in your life at the moment, causing dissension, upsetting, and disturbing your peace. Jesus blesses us in today’s gospel, “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 keeps us calm and strong in the face of “people from Judea’s” contradictions 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.” On the other hand, let us not be “people from Judea” in other people’s lives. Rather, let us strive to be channels of God’s peace by our words and actions.

To conclude, we pray with the last line of the second reading (Revelation 21:23) that the glory of God gives us light and the Lamb be our lamp. Let us invoke the light of the glory of God and the light of the Lamb to shine upon our lives to transform us, direct us, and heal us. May the light of the glory of God and the light of the Lamb shine around us to shield us and dispel all forces of contradiction and darkness. May the light of the glory of God and the light of the Lamb shine on our world that many people may come to repentance and be delivered from the plagues of the sins of idolatry and sexual immorality. Amen.

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