

Cycle A Fifth Sunday of Easter

Reading I, Acts 6:1-7

As the number of disciples continued to grow, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. So the Twelve called together the community of the disciples and said, "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, also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them. The word of God continued to spread, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly; even a large group of priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Responsorial Psalm, Ps 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Exult, you just, in the LORD; praise from the upright is fitting. Give thanks to the LORD on the harp; with the ten-stringed lyre chant his praises.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Upright is the word of the LORD, and all his works are trustworthy. He loves justice and right; of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

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.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Reading II, 1 Pt 2:4-9

Beloved: Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it says in Scripture: Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion, a cornerstone, chosen and precious, and whoever believes in it shall not be put to shame. Therefore, its value is for you who have faith, but for those without faith: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, and a stone that will make people stumble, and a rock that will make them fall. They stumble by disobeying the word, as is their destiny. You are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises" of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Gospel, Jn 14:1-12

Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where I am going you know the way." Thomas said to him, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves. Amen, amen, I say to you, 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."

Today's Scripture tell us that God loves us so much that He chose us and revealed to us that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, going before us to arrange that we will share in His glory in heaven. When we live our everyday lives following His plan for us, we glorify Him. But, we can't just think it or say it, we have to do it.

Yesterday we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Blessed Virgin Mary's appearance in Fatima, Portugal in 1917. And, what a glorious celebration it was! I would like to share a story about her. Do you know what Mary's favorite flower was? You may have heard that when she appeared in the past, people can usually smell roses. But legend tells us that the rose was not her favorite, the lily was. That is why we see paintings and statues of Saint Joseph holding a lily...a lily for his wife Mary. So who's favorite flower is the rose? If you guessed Jesus, you are right. You see everything that Mary does points us to her Son, Jesus our Lord! I love that story because it reminds us how much Mary is devoted to Jesus, but also how much she loves us.

Yesterday, May 13 was the 100th anniversary of the apparition of Our Lady to three young shepherd children in the small village of Fatima in Portugal. 1917 was a dangerous time when World War I was raging in Europe. Mary appeared six times to Lucia, 9, and her cousins Francisco, 8, and his sister Jacinta, 6, telling them to pray the Rosary, to never again offend God, and to dedicate themselves to God, the source of love and mercy. Francisco and Jacinta died within a few years of seeing Mary. But they had listened to Mary and performed their Christian virtue in heroic ways by constantly praying; by frequently giving their lunch to the poor, instead eating wild berries; and by refusing to lie about what they had seen when their lives were threatened. It is said that 50,000 people attended Mary's last appearance that October and saw the sun spinning. You may have heard that Pope Francis visited Fatima yesterday where he canonized Francisco and Jacinta as saints. This was in spite of what some in the Church previously believed "that children couldn't be saints because they didn't yet have the ability to practice Christian heroic virtue like adults." Francisco and Jacinta became the youngest non-martyr children in the history of the Church to be made saints.

You know, there is something special, noble and even inspiring when ordinary people (including children) do something extraordinary for other people and indeed, for God. Not because they have to. Not because they expect something in return. It's because as Christians they are called by Jesus to live holy and giving lives. Because they believe that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, as the Gospel says, "*whoever believes in me will do the works that I do and will do greater ones than these*".

But more than this...when our Christian communities, our spiritual houses of living stones, Our Lady of Fatima here and St. Brendan's in Georgia, ...when we act together, there is something truly powerful happening beyond a series of individual acts. The world changes....lives are saved...souls are saved. Maybe we were surprised by the outpouring of appreciation and love from the whole world since Pope Francis was elected. There is no doubt that God is blessing the world through the Pope...So, are we also convinced that God blesses the world through our Catholic communities of Our Lady of Fatima and St. Brendan's as well? We better be, because we Christians are "*a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people His own...*" We are the body of Christ.

But, we can't just sit in our pews being faithful Catholics. We need to go out in the world to be Christ to each other. If we want to experience this we take our Catholic preparation and get involved...

- We can look for ways to help and serve others...and, our faith is strengthened. We come to learn that Jesus is the Way and the Truth.
- Or, We can share our resources and visit with some lonely souls who are not just hungry for food. We come to learn that Jesus is the Life.

In the United States today is also Mother's Day. I would like to ask all mothers to please stand for a special blessing. Happy Mother's Day to all you Moms on earth, the Moms in Heaven, Grandmas, Foster Moms, Step Moms and part-time Moms, and you who are Mother figures in people's lives. God Bless You! To Our Lady of Fatima, our Mother Mary, you are always there for us, pointing us to your son Jesus Christ who is the joy in our lives. Let us praise and exult Him every day glorifying Him with our lives! Alleluia! Alleluia!