

Homily Notes

May 07, 2017: Fourth Sunday of Easter

I Acts. 2:14a.36-41; II 1 Pet. 2: 20b-25; III Jn. 10: 1-10

Jesus the Shepherd and Guardian of our Souls

As we continue our Easter journey, on this fourth Sunday, we are presented with the most committed and never compromising shepherd and guardian of our souls, who even sacrificed His life for the salvation of the sheep. We have this theme of shepherding and calling throughout today's readings, In the first reading Acts 2: 38, Peter exhorts those in Jerusalem: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and for all those are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." In the second reading, 1 Peter 2:20-25, Peter writes that Christ has laid down an example for his followers in order for them to cease being led astray and return to "the shepherd and the guardian of your souls." In the gospel reading, in the parable of good shepherd, Jesus is presented as our shepherd who leads, protects and guides us to the safest pastures of life.

Gospel presents Jesus as the shepherd who gathers his sheep by calling them personally. The sheep know his voice and follow him (10:4). This is the first way we can know if we are his sheep. We hear the voice of Jesus and we follow him. In John chapter 9 the blind man heard the voice of Jesus, followed what Jesus said to do, and he was healed. The Pharisees and Jewish leaders are not listening to the voice of Jesus and they are not following him. Therefore, they are still in their sins. Do we know the voice of

Jesus? Do you know his teachings? Do you read his words? Do you do exactly what he says? Do you follow him wherever he goes?

Jesus calls his sheep by name. Jesus knows your name. Jesus knows who you are. A mother was once asked by a census-taker how many children she had. She replied, 'Well, there's Geo and Tom and Martha and...' 'Never mind the names,' the man interrupted, 'Just give me the numbers'. The mother angrily replied, 'They don't have numbers, they all have names!' This might be a funny story, but in our modern world this is so true. We are often reduced to numbers and statistics, by the government and commercial world (Adhar Number, Election Card No, Insurance No, Health Card No, ATM and Pan No. etc.) All our identities are reduced into mere numbers. But Jesus Christ knows each and every one of us by our names, just like a shepherd knows each and every one of the sheep in his flock. Personal names and identities are important to God, especially his own. Do we really need any more than this? Jesus knows you and is calling you by name to follow him. He knows YOU! That's exciting!

So in today's Eucharistic celebration let us reflect on whom are you listening to? What are you listening to? True disciples only listen to the voice of Jesus. True disciples only follow Jesus. True disciples receive salvation, safety, and satisfaction. They have abundant life. **-Ciril Vallomkunnel**

May 14 2017: V Sunday of Easter
I Acts 6: 1-7; II 1Peter 2: 4-9; III Jn 14:1-12

Jesus as the Way, the Truth and Life

A famous American author says; "What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals." Today's gospel strongly affirms that Jesus is the way to the Father. A way usually leads to a destination. But it is difficult to identify the way with the destination. For instance, the way to our cathedral cannot be identified as the cathedral. It would be strange if the way itself becomes the destination. Then, isn't it something strange that Gospel according to John shares with us today?

Jesus is the way to the Father. He is the life and the truth. He says that He is the way and the destination as well. The Father and the Son are mutually indwelled. So, one who finds the way finds the father himself. The Son is the supreme revealer of the Father. That is, we know the Abba only through and by his Son. Thus it is an invitation to all to receive eternal life by accepting Jesus - the way, the truth and the life. The Spirit of the Lord leads us to the fullness of the truth. So, let us pray to the Holy Spirit to walk in the correct path in our daily life and to also lead our life partner, children and friends to Jesus.

Finally may our goals be not to achieve something but to become true disciples of Jesus. May we truly experience Jesus as the Way, Truth and Life. **-Bibin**

May 21, 2017; VI Sunday of Easter

I Acts 8:5-8.14-17; II 1Peter 3:15-18; III Jn 14:15-21

Holy Spirit is with Us

Today we are called to reflect on the theme ‘Divine presence of the holy spirit’, it refers to the missionary age of the Christians and the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit given to the apostles. Jesus offers us His Holy Spirit to be with us forever. In the Gospel Jesus calls Him the advocate, the spirit of truth who will live in the hearts of the believers to console and guide them. Even though the presence of the Holy Spirit is a free gift of God’s love it is only received by those who desire and prepare themselves for it.

The first reading from the Acts of the Apostles exhorts us with the persecution of the early church in Jerusalem and yet Christianity spreads through the surrounding places. Philip went through the towns and villages of Samaritans proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ. The apostles were called to lay their hands on them, so that the community receives the Holy Spirit. Today the priests and religious are called to continue the work of the apostles and proclaim the message of Christ.

The Gospel continues the farewell discourse of Jesus, where He prepares his disciples not only for his coming suffering and death

but also for his resurrection and ascension. He promises them that even afterward he will remain with them but in a different way from now. The reading is the continuation of last Sunday where we left off. Last Sunday's passage centered on believing in Jesus, and today it centers on loving Him. Those who love Jesus keep his commandments. In other words, covenant fidelity is an outpouring of love. Jesus is about to leave the world and return to His Father and when He is no longer physically present He promises to send another advocate, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth to be with us always.

Many in the world do not recognize the Spirit. They people are deaf to the Spirit. The disciples of Christ however do know the Spirit, and though Jesus tells his disciples that He is about to leave them and they are clearly alarmed. Jesus assures them that they will not be deserted like orphans. The followers of Christ will never be cut off from Jesus. They will always share His love, peace, joy and hope in their day to day life. He reassures the disciples that He will come back; he will continue to be with them but in a different way. Therefore, 'Anybody who 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.' **-Derhasat Narzary**

May 28, 2017: Ascension of the Lord
I Acts 1:1-11: II Eph 1:17-23: III Mt 28:16-20

Making Disciples of All Nations

The Gospels contain many parables of a master who sets out on a long journey and gives his servants charge of his estate until his return. In the feast of the Ascension of the Lord parable becomes reality. Jesus departs to his heavenly Father and leaves his disciples in charge of the affairs of his kingdom till his return in glory. Each of the Gospels we have ends with a scene in which Jesus finally takes leave of his disciples. These farewell scenes focus not on describing the event in detail but on the last words that Jesus leaves with his disciples. In fact, the very fact of a bodily ascension of Jesus into heaven is described only by Luke. It is Luke who wrote

the Acts of the Apostles from which we got our first reading today. A later ending of Mark also includes the Ascension. There are important similarities and differences between Luke and Acts on the one hand, and Matthew and Mark on the other, regarding the details of this farewell scene.

For example, in Luke-Acts the Ascension takes place in Jerusalem, whereas in Matthew and Mark it takes place in Galilee. Both traditions, however, agree that it took place on a mountain. In Luke-Acts the Ascension happens forty days after the Resurrection during which period Jesus appears repeatedly to his followers. In Matthew and Mark there is no indication of this time period between the Resurrection and the Ascension, rather the first appearance of Jesus to his disciples after the resurrection is also the last. The gospel writers apparently were not aiming at accuracy in historical details; they were more concerned with transmitting a message.

So what is the message, the charge that Jesus gives his disciples as he takes physical leave of them? It is: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

These are the last words of Jesus as recorded differently in the Acts and in Matthew and Mark. All of them are in agreement that (a) Jesus gave his disciples a mission, a task to engage them till he returns in glory, and (b) he assured them of divine assistance in the carrying out of this mission.

The mission is to bear witness to the Good News of Jesus to the ends of the earth, to go into all nations of the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.. The universal reach of this mission is very clear. The message of Jesus is meant to be good news in the ears of all humankind irrespective of nationality or culture. Given the fact that till date many nations have embraced other religions in preference to the gospel, maybe it is time to ask: Are these people rejecting the message of Jesus or are they rejecting the messengers and the way in which they have presented it?

The air of superiority and triumphalism assumed by many Christian missionaries is a disservice to the gospel and not part of the good news. Have we perhaps spoilt the Good Story in the telling?

At the beginning of the twentieth century, some mission-minded Christians started a periodical and called it “The Christian Century.” That title was an expression of their triumphalistic belief that by the end of the century the whole world would have been Christianized. Today we have hopefully grown wiser and humbler as we realize that in the 20th century, not only did we fail to Christianize the whole world, but rather that we added two world wars to our record of “accomplishments.”

The spreading of the Good News to all nations is not a goal that can be attained by dint of human might and craft. That is why Jesus promises to empower his messengers from on high by his abiding presence and the Holy Spirit. The challenge of sharing the Good News with all humankind should, therefore, begin on our knees as we confess that we have often taken matters into our own selfish human hands and promise to give the Holy Spirit a chance. -**Munachi E. Ezeogu, cssp** (From Internet)

June 4, 2017: Pentecost Sunday

I Acts 2:1-11; II 1 Cor. 12:3b-7, 12-13; III Jn 20:19-23

The Language Everyone Understands

“King without palace, soldier without weapon but still conquered the whole world without fighting, but only by Love. He is the resurrected Jesus.” Today we are celebrating the feast of Pentecost. The word Pentecost literally means “Fiftieth,” because it was celebrated fifty days after the Feast of the Passover. It was originally a day of thanksgiving to God for the completion of good harvest. At Pentecost, two loaves of bread were offered in gratitude for the harvest. Later, the Jews added the remembrance of Yahweh’s covenant with Noah, which took place fifty days after the great deluge, to the Feast of the Pentecost. Still later, they made this feast an occasion of thanksgiving to God for His

Sinaitic covenant with Moses, which also occurred fifty days after the beginning of the Jewish exodus from Egypt.

Today both the Jews and the Christians celebrate Pentecost. But for the Christians it is a memorial of the day the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles and the Virgin Mary in the form of fiery tongues – an event that took place fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost also commemorates the official inauguration of the Christian Church by the apostolic preaching of St. Peter, resulting in the conversion of 3000 Jews to the Christian faith. It is thus the official birthday of the Church.

The first reading describes in detail, the miraculous transformation that took place during the Pentecost. The disciples experienced the power of the Holy Spirit as it flooded them like parted tongues of fire. As a result of this experience, the frightened apostles were transformed into brave witnesses of Jesus, powerfully proclaiming Him as the promised Messiah-- the Lord and Saviour of all mankind. On this occasion, the Jews and proselytes from other countries, who knew very little of Aramaic or Hebrew, miraculously heard the Word of God in their own languages. The Holy Spirit gave this “power of tongues” to the apostles in order that their message could reach every heart. He empowered the early Christians to radiate the love of Christ and their strong faith. It was this “anointing by the Holy Spirit” that supported and strengthened the early Christian martyrs during the period of brutal persecution that followed.

This feast also takes us to the language of the heart. A child may not know the spoken language but surely feel and experience the language of love. That could be expressed in many ways, where there is love, smile exists for ever. Wherever there is love miracle happen. Wherever there is love, hatred ends. Wherever there is love, peace begins. Wherever there is love the community transforms. wherever there is love the society develops. Because God is Love. **-Dn. Pritam Bara**

June 11, 2017: Trinity Sunday
I Ex 34. 4-6,8-9; II 2Cor13. 11-13; III Jn 3 16-18

The Depth of Our Relationships

First Sunday after Pentecost, the Catholic Church celebrates the feast of the Holy Trinity. It is a feast of relationships; relationship among the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore it is apt to ponder over our family ties.

In the Gospel we hear from the evangelist St. John, for God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. And the first reading from Exodus we see the depths of His love that Lord is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and so on.

In the gospels, the manifestation of God's love is depicted as the lamb of God. What's the meaning of this metaphor? Leviticus chapter 16 and explain it convincingly. Prophet Aron sacrifices two lambs, one for the sin offering and the second for the atonement of the sins of the faithful. The lamb being sacrificed for the sins of the people in the new testament is Jesus.

This sort of sacrifice still happens in our families. Parents sacrifice their career, comforts, energy for their children. Spouse sacrifice his or her comfort zones for the sake of family and to strengthen the mutual bond to each other. By doing this they become a blessing to one another. It is inevitably visible in the modern nuclear family. May the feast of Holy Trinity helps us to love and rise to next level of greatness. That of deep and genuine relationship among ourselves and with God! -**Nixon SVD**

June 18, Sunday: Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ
I Dt. 8:2-3, 14b-16a; II 1Cor 10:16-17; III Jn 6:51-58

Breaking Ourselves for Others

Today the Catholic Church celebrates the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, Corpus Christi. It is the solemn celebration of our belief that the Body and Blood of Christ is really present

in the Holy Eucharist. This is really an auspicious occasion for expressing our joy of the institution of the Holy Eucharist on Maundy Thursday and the sober atmosphere of the Good Friday.

The readings of this feast lead us into the depth of the Eucharistic theology. The Lord provided manna from the heaven and water from the rock in the wilderness journey of Israel to sustain and strengthen them on their way to the Promised Land. This manna and water in the desert prefigure the Eucharistic body and blood of Christ. Jesus offers his own body and blood for the nourishment of our souls in our journey into the eternal life. "I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world." Jesus gave us his own body and blood as our spiritual food in the form of bread and wine in order to abide in us and make us united with him. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person." This Eucharistic communion with Christ finds its fulfilment in our unity with our brethren. It is when the Christ in me recognizes the Christ in others that the Eucharistic communion is fulfilled. Thus we all together should build a Eucharistic community in Christ where all abide in love and service for each other. This is what St. Paul envisioned when he writes to the church in Corinth: "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."

As we celebrate the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be strengthened in our faith in the presence of the lord in the Eucharist. Receiving Corpus Christi demands from us to be alter Christi. So we shall live a life of Eucharistic communion breaking up ourselves for the service of others and be life givers after the example of Jesus Christ our Lord and Master.

-Arun CST

June 25, 2017: XII Sunday of the Year
I-Jer.20:10-13; II-Rom.5:12-15; III-Mt.10:26-33

Do Not Be Afraid!

Today's liturgy of the Word invites us to live without fear. The readings remind us of the hostility we will encounter as we carry on the work of Jesus in the world and so the readings encourage us to persevere in doing the work of Jesus. They assure us that our work will be effective despite the opposition we encounter. In the Gospel Jesus commands his disciples not to fear their persecutors.

The first reading from Jeremiah reflects on the suffering of the believer. Jeremiah is confident that God would not let his enemies overcome him. He says, "But the Lord is with me, like a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble, and they will not prevail." In the second reading Paul assures the faithful followers of Jesus that they need not be afraid of opposition because they share in the death and resurrection of Jesus. With these words of encouragement Paul explains why, in spite of the bitter experience of opposition, their work will be effective. Since Jesus, by his death and resurrection has conquered sin, his followers will eventually succeed in carrying out His works of bringing joy to the world. We need not be afraid of those who oppose us, for we are united with Christ in His resurrection.

If we are loyal to Jesus in this life, Jesus will be loyal to us in the life to come. On the other hand, if we are too proud to acknowledge that Christ is our Lord and Saviour, He will not acknowledge us in the next life. Hence we must not deny Him through our silence, word or deed. We must not be ashamed to live as people of faith and proclaim our Christian convictions when necessary. Sometimes we are afraid that we will make a wrong decision. Sometimes we are afraid of what others will think when we speak of Jesus. Sometimes we are afraid of what the future will bring to us. At the root of these fears is the fear of loss. Every fear we have is grounded in the knowledge that we have something or someone to lose.

(Contd on p. 37)