

May 17, 2020      6th Sunday of Easter

I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you!

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

Psalm 66:1-7, 16, 20

1Peter 3:15-18

John 14:15-21

In the first reading Philip goes to Samaria where he proclaimed Christ. The crowds paid attention to him when they saw the signs he was performing; the unclean of spirit were cleansed, and those crippled and paralyzed were healed. Many were baptized and a great joy came upon them. When Peter and John heard of this they came, laid hands upon them and the people received the Holy Spirit.

The Psalmist tells his listeners of what God had done for him as well as for the people. Tremendous deeds such as holding back the water so the Israelites could cross the river are things to shout joyfully about, things to praise, and reasons to rejoice.

In the second reading Peter exhorts us to sanctify Christ in our hearts. We need always be ready, he says, to give explanations to unbelievers in a gentle and reverend way, and with a clear conscience and in this way those who try to defame us will themselves be shamed. We are not to forget that Christ's suffering is what opened up the path to God for us.

In the Gospel Jesus reminds us that if we love him then we are to keep his commandments. He prays to the Father that another Advocate, the **Spirit of Truth** be with us always. The world doesn't accept, know, or see this Advocate, but we, who observe the commandments show our love and the Father will love us, Jesus will love us, even reveal himself to us.



**The Father answers the prayers of the Son  
And the Advocate,  
The Spirit of Truth is sent to us.**

In the Gospel Jesus connects two very important ideas, namely, love and obedience. Love is not simply an emotional feeling but rather encompasses a commitment to follow through with actions that will benefit another. It is in that love that we can witness to our faith and yet be gentle and reverend even if those listening are rude. Only God knows the afterthoughts and the effect our kindness, calmness and patience will eventually have on others. Christ suffered for all and our love must follow the example and be shared with all.

Philip brought change to the crippled and paralyzed that were healed and while he pointed out the way to them it was Jesus who gave them the strength to walk in it. Peter announced mysteries to this listeners but it is the heavenly Father that unlocks their secret meaning. Jesus mentioned the commandments but more importantly reveals the spirit of the law. We may hear beautiful words but it is the Spirit that imparts understanding to the hearing. Many things affect us outwardly but it our Lord that instructs us inwardly and enlightens mind and heart.

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# Truth

*Jesus said: I am the Way; I am the Truth and Life.  
No one can come to the Father except through me.<sup>1</sup>*

O God, *send out your light and your truth; they shall be our guide, to lead us to your holy mountain to the place where you dwell.<sup>2</sup>* Our way thinking often misdirects us as we do not see the complete picture of things as they are.

Of what use are those things that are esoteric and unnecessary if we neglect those that are necessary. The twelve disciples were close to Jesus and yet he would often say to them: *Why do you not understand what I say?<sup>3</sup>*

Of what use is knowledge of trifling niceties? If we hear Jesus, the Eternal Word, we are freed from many distractions. From that Word all things proceed and they give testimony to Him. *Through him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through him.<sup>4</sup>* This knowing brings us into a oneness where serenity prevails and the heart is resolute.

**O God, you are Truth,** make me one with you in Love, the kind of Love that flows between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! Things disturb me when I see, hear, or read them and they exclude You. Let all the learned be still, all the creatures serene while You speak to my heart in silence. Elijah recognized your voice in *a light silent sound.<sup>5</sup>*

When we are single-minded in your Way, *we leave foolishness behind and we will live, go forwards in the ways of perception.<sup>6</sup>* Even subtle things will be understood because *as your word unfolds it gives light, and even the simple understand.<sup>7</sup>*

Persons of pure, simple, firm, and steadfast hearts are not easily distracted by the many things they are called to do because they have been freed from self-interests. Misguided affections can hinder us more than anything else. Good and devout persons organize their outward works according to inward priorities, i.e., by the dictates of their reason and obedience to the Father's will. To overcome the attractions of worldly things is indeed a difficult struggle, but our daily efforts help us to grow strong spiritually. This effort needs be our main concern and as Paul *notes you are fighting the same battle which you saw me fighting for him and which you hear I am fighting still.<sup>8</sup>*

Knowledge in this life will always entail obscurities. *Now I can know only imperfectly; but then I shall know just as fully as I am myself known.<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> John 14:6

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 43:3

<sup>3</sup> John 8:43a

<sup>4</sup> John 1:3

<sup>5</sup> 1Kings 19:12

<sup>6</sup> Proverbs 9:6

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 119:130

<sup>8</sup> Phil 1:30

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor 13:12b

*The heart of the wise seeks knowledge<sup>10</sup> and this is good, however, a clear conscience and a virtuous life is of higher priority; if only knowledge is emphasized it is easy to make mistakes and not bear the fruit we are capable of. If only people would make as much an effort to nourish virtues and avoid sin as they do in probing hypothetical abstractions there would be less evil in the world, less differences among those who profess to be true believers. On judgment day the concern will be on what we have done, not on what we have read; on how well we practiced what we preached.*

*Many who were considered great in worldly eyes simply faded away and such is the way for vain teachings that do not place values where they belong. *For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths.**<sup>11</sup>

*Love God and love neighbor<sup>12</sup> and you will be truly great. Whoever humbles himself is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.<sup>13</sup> Whoever is truly wise considers everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*<sup>14</sup>

*We have wisdom when we follow the will of our heavenly Father just as Jesus did: The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what is pleasing to him.*<sup>15</sup>

This article is based on Book 1, Chapter 3 of Thomas of Kempis' writing, "Imitation of Christ."

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<sup>10</sup> Prov 15:14

<sup>11</sup> 2 Tim 4:3-4

<sup>12</sup> Matt 22:36-38

<sup>13</sup> Matt 18:4

<sup>14</sup> Philippians 3:8

<sup>15</sup> John 8:29