

5th Sunday of Easter – Cycle A
by Father Hugo L. Blotsky, O.S.B.
May 10, 2020

- I. We are living in the best of times, and we are living in the worst of times. We are now in the spring of the year, which is a time of new beginnings, new life. As Catholic Christians, we are in the Easter Season, which is a spiritual season of new beginnings, new life, new hope. When we look around us, there are signs of new life, signs of dying, signs of death.**
 - A. When we celebrated our Holy Week Services a month ago, we heard Scripture readings about how Jesus was Persecuted, Crucified, and then died. At first, it seemed like the end of His spiritual movement, an end to His following, and an end to the many promises He made to His followers.**
 - B. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead. His resurrection gave new hope and new energy to His followers. Jesus had promised to send the Holy Spirit upon His disciples to help them carry out the mission He had entrusted to them.**
 - 1. The Holy Spirit came 2,000 years ago into the world, which gave New Life and New Hope to His Church. The world has never been the same since then.**
 - C. After the Holy Spirit came into the world, the Church grew very rapidly. Originally, there were 12 apostles. As the Church grew, there was a need for men for ministry to the poor and needy. Through the laying on of hands and calling down of the Holy Spirit upon other men among His disciples, we read in the first reading for this Sunday that the apostles selected 7 men to be deacons.**
 - 1. The deacons were to do the service work in the church so that the apostles would be free to preach and teach the Word of God.**
 - 2. The bishops in the church today are the successors to the apostles.**
 - 3. Later, the bishops needed assistants to help with preaching teaching, and administering the Sacraments. Men were ordained to assist the bishops. That is how the priests came about.**
 - D. We read in this Sunday’s First Letter of Saint Peter, our first pope, in which he said to the disciples of the Lord, “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.”**

E. The mission of all disciples in the Church is: proclaiming the Word of God, fellowship, and service.

II. In the Gospel of John for this Sunday, we heard Jesus encourage 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.”

A. Jesus had announced to His disciples that He was going to die by crucifixion, which caused the disciples to worry about what would happen to them without the Presence of Jesus in their midst.

B. The disciples had seen Jesus heal the sick and comfort the afflicted. The disciples became anxious as they wondered who would heal them or their loved ones if Jesus were to die and be taken from them. His plan was to share His healing power with His apostles and other disciples.

C. The disciples had seen Jesus raise Lazarus and others back to life after they had died. The disciples worried about who would raise them or their loved ones back to life if they were to die after Jesus is killed. His promise was to offer them eternal life and everlasting life in heaven.

D. Jesus was telling His disciples and He is saying this to you and me also, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” We are not to be anxious about what is going on in the world today, nor about what isn’t going right in our personal lives. No matter how anxious we may become, or how worried we may be, anxiety and worry will not bring us any happiness.

E. The disciples worried whether there would be enough room in heaven for them to get in. So, Jesus promised that there is adequate room in heaven for all. He said, “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places.”

F. Again, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” Jesus had to calm the fears of His Apostles after He was crucified as they feared that their own lives were at risk at the hands of the blood-thirsty crowd on the day of the crucifixion.

G. The Risen Jesus appeared to the Apostles and said, “Do not be afraid.” Before Jesus could use them to preach and teach, He needed to calm them of their fears and worries.

- H. We read in the Acts of the Apostles how Jesus had sent the Holy Spirit on the Apostles so they could be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gave them the strength and boldness to go among the people to preach and teach without fear and anxiety.
 - I. The Apostles had become so fearless that all of them were martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ, except the Apostle John who died a natural death.
- III. None of us is stuck here on earth forever. Someday, our earthly life will also come to an end. We don't know the day nor the hour, but some day each and every one of us will die.
- A. For Christians, hearing that we will die some day is not bad news, but good news. This means that if we follow the Lord Jesus and follow God's will for our lives, we will spend eternity with the Lord, all the angels and saints, and with our deceased loved ones who have gone before us.
 - B. In the Next Life, there is no more pain, no sorrow, no suffering, no disappointment, but total fulfillment of all our hopes and dreams, and life everlasting.
- IV. God has made each and every one of us in His own image and likeness. God has a plan for our lives. As our Creator, we need to talk to our Creator to learn why He made us, to discover what our purpose is in life, and to find ways in which we can use our talents and abilities to make life better for ourselves and for those around us.
- 1. In the New Testament, we read that Jesus came into the world to give us abundant life.
 - 2. He doesn't want to make life easy for us, but that we might have a better life, and a more fulfilling life.
- A. Poets and spiritual writers are telling us that we never live life to the fullest until we can face a basic fact, which is that someday our life here on earth will come to an end, and that the people around us will someday also die.
 - 1. Instead of wasting much time and energy being in denial about death, we can spend this precious time and energy making the most of life.
 - B. None of us can claim to have a right to a long life. At the moment of our conception while still in our mother's womb, there was the potential for death. To live a long life is a blessing, and not a right.

- C. When I was a hospital chaplain, I visited with patients who shared with me their encounters with heaven. One patient, Ray, was suffering from terminal cancer. One afternoon, while praying for him in his hospital room, Ray, sat up in his bed suddenly and started pointing to something above the foot end of his bed.**
- 1. He said that deceased relatives and friends had come into the room and wanted him to go with them. He recognized all those who came to him in a bright light.**
 - 2. He described the bright light as being brighter than any kind of electrical light. He said that the light filled the whole room and went beyond the walls and ceiling.**
- D. Ray wasn't able to go with them that day. He had one more person to forgive before he could die. The next day, Ray, said to me that he forgave that person. A couple days later, Ray died peacefully.**
- E. Jesus had promised His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them, and that He would be returning to take them with Him so that they could live in His Father's house.**
- F. One of our traditions in the Catholic Church is to pray the Litany of the Saints in the presence of a Catholic who is in danger of dying. In this prayer, we pray asking that Jesus, Mary, all the angels and saints be present to the patient who is in danger of death. We ask them to pray for our sick loved one, to support them in time of need, and then when the time comes to surrender their earthly life, to have the faith and courage to let go and go to the Lord.**
- G. Until that day comes when we too need to surrender our earthly life to God, we still have much work to do here on earth.**