

Homily for the 5th Sunday of Easter

May 9-10, 2020

Readings: Acts of the Apostles 6: 1-7; 1 Peter 2: 4-9; John 14: 1-12

Preacher: Sr. Barbara Moore

Throughout John's Gospel we find Jesus trying to explain who he is and what he values. This weekend, he shares a very expansive description of himself. "The way, the truth and the life" are general terms and very broad concepts. But they are most applicable these days. People are anxious for a "way" out of their imposed insolation. They desire "truth" about the virus and its causes and treatment, but find that multiple lies are often told. And for thousands of people, "life" has been snuffed out as they hear of their loved ones dying, often alone.

For us as Christians, Jesus offers that way, truth and life. Other faiths draw their followers to different solutions, but truth, a way, and life are behind all of their and our religious choices. I wonder if that is what Jesus might have meant when he said, "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places." These facts call us to great reverence and respect for world religions. We are all struggling to serve a Power greater than we are.

Often, we have questions about God and who God is and how we can come to know the Divine with our limited human minds and hearts. Jesus offers us an answer this weekend. "...if you know me, you will know my Father also. Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." There is the answer.

It is through a deep reflection on the Gospels and New Testament letters that we can gradually come to a limited understanding of how Jesus lived and what he valued. His parables and encounters with the suffering and possessed give us a look into his life. His call for forgiveness and love of neighbor offer another view of his values. He personally links himself with the outcast, sinner, sick, homeless, prisoner and dying by saying, "What you do (for them) you do to me."

Peter's letter expresses the same concept using different metaphors. He calls his listeners "living stones," part of a great structure held together by the "keystone." Keystone is a better description than "cornerstone." The keystone is at the

highest and most central place of an arch. It holds all other stones together. That is Christ. Christ's teaching and life holds all other teachings together and enables us to see in Jesus our God.

But for Jesus' followers to share all these insights within their own first context was not always easy. First, they tried to spread their message to their Jewish brothers and sisters in their synagogues. Then they extended their efforts to those called, "God Fearing" souls. That is, men and women who were not Jewish but prayed and worshiped with Jews in their synagogues. Then in time, Jesus' followers realized that Gentiles were also receiving a call and also believed in Jesus. The Apostles gradually began to expand their message to a variety of people. And then, to make it all the more difficult, there was a strong belief that the second coming of Jesus was just around the corner. It is good for us to realize that 1st century Christians did not always have an easy time.

We hear in our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles that conflict arose in the early community. Some of the believing Greek widows began to complain that the Hebrew, that is the Jewish widows, were being given special attention. These days, we see a similar modern situation playing out. Conflict exists for some between red and blue states and how that is playing out during this covid 19 virus. Advocates for the Greek widows spoke up for them and the leadership and the whole community realized the problem, and selected Greek men to serve this part of the community. Thus, the new deacons. Just as the early Christians found ways to meet the needs of their whole community. May this difficult time in our national and global life, draw the same kind of responses from all of us.

The Scriptures are ever ancient yet ever new. May these powerful descriptions of Jesus strengthen us as we live our daily lives and ministries.

"I am the way the truth and the life."