

6th Sunday Easter Year “C”

May 21-22, 2022

Readings: Acts 15: 1-2, 22-29; Revelation 21:10-14,22-23; John 14:23-29

We are privy to a glimpse into one of the early controversies in the Church in today's first reading. Unfortunately, too many of us fall prey to interests about the problems of others—we cannot seem to help ourselves. Controversy sells. Why is it that grocery stores and drug stores still sell tabloid magazines right by the checkout line!

Why does controversy sell? Does it make people feel better to know that others are miserable or have problems? That other people fight or argue? What a revelation! Why we feel a need broadcast these realities to the world is beyond me. Disagreements should neither surprise us nor intrigue us. Most certainly, they should not entertain us! Sadly, they do!

In our first reading, St. Luke relates an account of a disagreement, not because he was a gossip, but to show that the early church went through growing pains. And yet, the Holy Spirit continued to guide the early Christians, as Jesus promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against his Church. This disagreement was resolved at the Council of Jerusalem, held around 50 A.D. Though it does not bear this title, it possesses all the attributes of an ecumenical Council: the entire church gathered to address critical issues, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Just as the Holy Spirit guided the church through the controversies of its time, the Holy Spirit guides us today. It will guide our Archdiocesan Synod in two weeks. In our reading, the disagreement was over the degree to which new Christians need to observe the Mosaic laws. Were they bound to follow them all? The answer given was a resounding no!

The new Christians were not to have any undue burdens placed upon them. The church did not wish to unduly burden people then, nor today. To observe the commandments, practice the beatitudes, live the virtues—this is a challenge for any of us. But it is not an undue burden.

An undue burden is that which is unnecessary, impractical, and beyond the scope of what is intended. The church is the bride of Christ, the sacrament of salvation in our midst. The Christian faithful are to live lives according to their state in life- we are not all the same in our demeanors.

Certainly, various penitential practices in ages past might strike us today as extreme, though these were never placed upon the laity. The Lenten fasting requirements, say of 1950, were extremely strict. Today, these requirements are quite minimal. People struggle to see much value in sacrifice, mostly because there are so many things in our life that are specifically designed to make life easier. We've become soft!

I will readily admit that I have become a convert to "microwave bacon" and prepared meals at the grocery store. All that stands between me and a tasty breakfast or dinner is two to four minutes in the microwave! If life has become so much more convenient, is it any easier to live? Have these conveniences made our lives more peaceful or reflective? I don't think so.

Jesus reminds us in the gospel that his farewell gift to us is peace. We will never find peace if we continually seek out gossip, focus on what is wrong in the world, in our families or in our Church. Be neither distressed, nor fearful about these difficulties. It is part of life's journey. Our disputes can teach us important lessons about patience and charity.

With respect to controversy, pray for the grace to resist the temptation to engage in it as a bystander. That is so dangerous. If you are not careful, the internet is akin to Sagittarius A, a black hole at the heart of the Milky Way galaxy that would suck you into oblivion! You will be trapped- it is not pretty. Do not give into that temptation. Live with hope in the Lord.

Seek God, without fear of any undue burden of faith, and all will be well. The Holy Spirit is in charge. Let us pray for the grace to trust that God's plan for our local Archdiocese in the Synod will bear much fruit for this local Church. We are all much stronger when we work together in faith.