

## 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

In today's gospel we see Jesus preparing his disciples for his return to the Father.

There is always sadness/sorrow in parting. But to use the phrase from the play "Romeo and Juliet" by William Shakespeare I will say for Jesus his sorrowful parting is also 'sweet'. His parting is such sweet sorrow because it makes him console his distressed disciples that even though he will no longer visibly appear to them, he will still remain with them.

**"Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me tell you, 'I am going away and I will come back to you'".**

The divine presence will be given to them in a new way. That is, the Advocate, the Holy Spirit will stand alongside them as their guide, counselor and comforter.

The Holy Spirit will ever remind them of Jesus and give them a deeper understanding of Jesus' teaching.

In today's first reading, we see how the Holy Spirit guides the important decision of the early Church. We see how the Holy Spirit gives the disciples and the early Christians a deeper understanding of Jesus' teaching of making disciples of all nations.

Last week in the first reading Paul and Barnabas reported to the Church in Antioch about what God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

The Gentiles converted when the word of God was preached to them by the disciples. They allowed themselves to be shaped by its transforming grace. They made a total turn-around of faith.

The point is that the door of faith was opened to them, ushered them into the life of communion with God and offered them entry into his Church.

But in today's first reading we see the challenge that the early Church faces as a result of the entry of the Gentiles into the Church.

Their major concern is the question about whether the Gentile converts are still subject to the Jewish laws.

Some are of the view that unless the Gentile converts are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice, they cannot be saved.

Should the converts have to become Jews to be Christians?

The first reading gives insight on how they resolve the issue: by prayer and open dialogue under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

**“It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us...”**

The council of Jerusalem emphasizes less the practice of the Mosaic Law for the Gentile converts. The focus now for them is to be their personal relationship with Christ. With the help from Christ's teaching they can begin to understand how to live more fully with him and stand with him throughout their life.

We are Christians and the members of the Church because we have accepted the word of God which is preached to us and we have allowed ourselves to be shaped by its transforming grace. We have made a total turn-around of faith. We have decided to stand with the Lord so as to live with him throughout our life.

And as Christians we have received Christ's peace that is, we have received his blessing and we are in his friendship.

But there are some moments in our lives when our faith in the Lord is threatened. There are some moments in our lives when we lack the courage of perseverance. It is such occasions that the help of the Holy Spirit is especially necessary.

The point is we need to call on the Holy Spirit to help us daily but we should call for his assistance when our faith is in crisis and when we have a serious decision to make.

Let us remember that the Holy Spirit is given to guide, teach, counsel and comfort us on our Christian journey.

Next two weeks, June 9<sup>th</sup>, is Pentecost Sunday. To help us celebrate this solemnity of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on those God made his adopted children the Church invites us to participate in the Novena to the Holy Spirit from Friday May 31<sup>st</sup> to Saturday June 8<sup>th</sup>. The program for the Novena is in the bulletin.