

## Seventh Sunday of Easter: Being Present and Gathering Together

First Reading: Acts 1:12-14

Psalm 27:1, 4, 7-8

Second Reading: 1 Peter 4:13-16

Gospel: John 17:1-11a

What do we do when a loved one leaves home for the service, goes off to school, moves away for a job, or sadly, passes away? We gather together. We need to be around others to console us, to support us, and to pray with us. In the *Acts of the Apostles* today, it says that after Jesus had been taken up to heaven (the Ascension) the apostles returned to Jerusalem and went to the upper room. It says the eleven apostles, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and some women “devoted themselves with one accord to prayer.” They **gathered together**.

In the past ten weeks we were unable to **gather together**. We improvised and started live-streaming our Sunday Masses and scheduling Zoom meetings with the youth group and prayer group. It helps, but it’s not the real thing. Jesus didn’t come to see us by way of Zoom, FaceTime, or YouTube. He came to us in the flesh! I hear many people say they are ready to **gather together** and be present with each other in the flesh!

I have good news! We will be gathering together on Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, for our first Sunday Mass since the virus. It will still be a bit odd, since we can’t shake hands or touch each other, but we will be able to see each other in the flesh and not on a screen! How wonderful it will be to see all of you as we **gather together**.

This time of being away from each other has taught us not to underestimate the importance of being present to each other. The apostles were present to each other, and we need to be present to each other. My job is to be present to you. Approximately 75% of my job is to be physically present. Parents need to be present to their children. Children need to be present to their parents. Friends need to be present to each other. A “text message” doesn’t cut it! Facetime doesn’t cut it! We know that all too well! Look at Jesus in the Agony of the Garden; he asked

Peter, James, and John to be with him before he was arrested. Jesus, both human and divine, was asking humans to stay with him!

It is the same with us; we need others around us in good times and bad. We might not remember what they said or what gift they gave, but we certainly remember they showed up. We remember who attended our games, plays, concerts, recitals, graduations, and weddings. We remember who visited us in the hospital or at home when we were sick. Being present to each other is huge!

I am looking forward to being present with you so we can all pray together in one accord as the apostles did with our Blessed Mother and others. Let us thank the Lord for the faith, protection, and strength through this time away. Let us be full of hope as we wait patiently for another two weeks to return to **gather together** and be present with each other and with the Real Presence of our Lord, Jesus Christ, in the Eucharist.

Also, let us continue to pray for those infected with this virus and all those who are affected indirectly – especially our healthcare workers, cleaners, and all those who are considered “necessary” workers. We humbly ask, Lord, for those of us out of work, that we may safely return to work very soon.

God bless,

Fr. Mark