

3rd Wednesday of Easter. 4/21/2021

They went about preaching the word. This is the will of my Father, that all who see the Son may have eternal life.

The response to our psalm today was: Let all the earth cry out to God with joy. Joy is a basic attitude of Christians, as we recognize the many blessings that God pours in the world and in our lives. Most especially, the blessing of Jesus Christ and his resurrection. As we hear in the Gospel today, the will of God the Father is for us to have eternal life through Christ. It is his will is to raise us in the last day by sharing in the resurrection of Christ. He leads us to eternal live, changing the way we live today, and giving us joy.

We also hear in the reading of Acts that the joy of Christian life is not free of struggle. Instead, it is often through struggle that the power of God makes itself known.

After the resurrection, the followers of Jesus have concentrated in Jerusalem, forming there a community of faith that is starting to grow. But they are in a hostile environment. Things get so bad that Stephen is stoned to death, giving the Church its first martyr. A severe persecution breaks out. Saul is trying to destroy the church, entering house after house and dragging out men and women to hand them over for imprisonment. The lives of these first Christians are threatened, and they are forced to flee from Jerusalem.

But this scattering of the disciples does not destroy the Church. On the contrary, it begins the mission of the Church beyond Jerusalem. All the nations on the earth would be blessed through the chosen people of Israel, and we see that starting to happen.

We hear about Samaria first, where Philip proclaims Christ, and the crowds pay attention to what he tells them. And we hear that there was great joy in that city. We see the joy of Christ conquering the long-standing hatred between Samaritans and Jews. And this going out of the Church, adopting new sons and daughters, bringing joy, was triggered by the severe persecution and struggle in Jerusalem.

Looking at our lives today, chances are we can recognize struggles. Some of them external, others internal. As we hear the story of the early Church, we can ask ourselves, whether our struggles could be providential means to sanctify our lives, to strengthen the Church? We have a limited perspective and don't see the whole picture. But we know we can trust in the promises of Christ, who is close to us every moment of our lives.

As we prepare to embrace Christ in the Eucharist, we can make a point to be open to the joy of his resurrection, and let that joy fill our hearts, having a share of the eternal life that God wills for us.