

Fifth Sunday of Easter (2021)

I'm going to need a volunteer. Kevin, would you give me hand?

OK, I'm the "Catholic Church," and you are a "person." Got it? Good. Here we go.

Person: I want to do "X."

Catholic Church: You are free to do it.

Person: But you think "X" is wrong.

Catholic Church: Yes.

Person: Because you want to control me?

Catholic Church: No. You are free to do what you want.

Person: But you think "X" is wrong.

Catholic Church: Yes. But only because I want your ultimate good.

Person: But I want to do "X."

Catholic Church: You are free to do it.

Person: But I want you to say that "X" is good.

Catholic Church: I cannot say that.

Person: Why do you hate me?"

“Children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and truth.”

So says St. John in the opening line of our Second Reading.

It is good to be reminded that, in the earliest days of Christianity, there were no cathedrals, no Bible, no Catechism—all they had was a **great story to tell**, and not just any story—but the greatest story ever told.

Think about this for a moment. If someone you know is not a Catholic, or is a Catholic, but has not practiced the faith in years, and she tells you, “look, you have my full attention for the next five minutes—try and convince me to come back to the Church.”

Would you be ready? Would you have an outline, or several bullet points, or a powerful speech reduced to memory? Is there a story, or an experience that could do the trick?

Or would you be reduced to silence, too embarrassed or tongue-tied, unable to take advantage of this crucial moment to share with someone, ready to listen, the greatest story every told?

But then, on the other hand, perhaps, **words in and of themselves** would never be enough. What people respond to is the **DIFFERENCE** that faith makes in the lives of believers. It’s usually not very effective to just **SAY** the right things, things that inspire people, a message people needed to hear. No.

For *the greatest story ever told* to be **embraced**, people first need to **see it lived out**, see a change in the way Christians live, see the **impact** of their beliefs in the way they treat others.

St. John seems to have known that (to use modern language) **talking** a good game would never be enough. Believers would have to “**produce on the field**”, would have to “**back up**” their claims with **results**, with day-to-day choices that show others that their words were not simply that—words.

Don't we often fall into that trap? Don't we sometimes simply “talk” a good game? It's painful to consider those questions honestly.

*I **pray** for people to not go hungry, but do I do anything to actually **feed someone**?*

*I get up before this community and talk about the necessity of letting go of grudges and being **forgiving people**, but I know that I'm not quite as kind to some people who have **hurt me**.*

*We say that all people are loved by to God, yet we often pre-judge people and **come to conclusions** about them before we even get to know them.*

“Children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and truth.”

Our faith teaches us some pretty incredible things: that God the Son **became one of us; that He died for us; that He Son rose from the dead** and is alive.

So let's make sure this week that our faith isn't just words or just beliefs that rattle around in our heads.

Rather, let us make sure that our faith is a **living faith—one** that shapes the choices we make, the values we treasure, the attitudes we adopt.

Because you *know* what people think? "I don't believe what you say. I believe what you do."