

6EASTERC

[ACTS 15:1-2, 22-29](#)

[PS 67:2-3,5,6,8](#)

[REV 21:10-14, 22-23](#)

[JN 14:23-29](#)

Yesterday was May 25th and five months ago, the world around us was just finishing celebrating Christmas. And we, Catholic Christians, were just beginning to roll out our Christmas hymns as Advent had ended and our Christmas season had begun. That contrast is played out year after year, and I often wonder if the contrast will ever disappear.

I trust, if it does, it will not be Catholic Christians who give up their stance. We must continue to be different as long as others do not recognize how God has called us to worship.

We are now at a similar point in our Church year. We are nearing the end of the Easter season. In two weeks, we will celebrate Pentecost Sunday and conclude this beautiful Easter season. Most of the world around us has long forgotten that Easter was celebrated five weeks ago, let alone that Jesus' greeting when He appeared to His disciples was always, "Peace be with you." We must continue to be an Easter people, living with the Holy Spirit alive within us, guiding us in our decisions and actions.

While truth does not change, nothing can be static; love and life and faith must be centered on God and be verbs, not nouns.

Just as the spirit of Christmas sometimes disappears quite quickly, the joy of Easter also seems to disappear in the same manner. In light of this phenomenon, we find that the Scriptures have a deep insight into our call to faithful Catholic living, to living together united in the truths that Jesus taught and have been handed down by His Church, and must be lived out in love today.

We also get a glimpse into the real life of real people in the early Church. Not everyone agreed on everything. Imagine that! What they were all called to agree on, is what they were all called to believe, in order to be true followers of Jesus, the teachings of Jesus.

In the early Church, passionate love often was manifest by dying for the faith. Many of the Church leaders and faithful were martyred, loving as Jesus loved, giving their life out of love. Certainly, there was a massive effort to teach, to evangelize the world as the apostles and those they enlisted to join them answered the call to go out to all the world and baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Although we see that there were times the disciples did disagree with one another, we also see that they found ways to come together to solve their differences as is seen at the Council of Jerusalem in resolving the issue of Gentile circumcision. What comes up in today's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles is a law or rule, not a Commandment and certainly nothing Jesus ever taught about.

In Antioch there were not only Jewish Christians, but also Greek and Roman converts. The question arose as to whether the men had to comply with the law of Moses regarding circumcision. The argument became heated and threatened to divide the community.

One thing that we can glean from this reading from the Acts of the Apostles is that the results of the Council of Jerusalem decided that circumcision was unnecessary for Gentile converts is that in order to preserve the unity of the Church, and in order to keep within its fellowship people of diverse backgrounds and different understandings of the faith. That Council was a great example to show it is possible and sometimes necessary to adopt compromise solutions. Such solutions are possible when the issue at stake can be relegated to things that are indifferent, that is, not issues of doctrine or morals. The beauty of the work of the Holy Spirit we anticipate at Pentecost is that this Divine Guide of the Church leads the hierarchy as Jesus put in place with the first bishops, the apostles, to lead us.

There have been periods in the Church's history when unity has been confused with uniformity and when such uniformity has been imposed on believers at the cost of legitimate pluralism. And, there are times when people have wanted diversity so much because they want their own version of God, a version that does not conform with the Christian Unity, let alone the Truth Jesus is and Jesus taught. True love for Christ always shows in humble obedience to Christ's true Church. All the saints show us this in the way they react to controversies, which occur in every epoch.

That being said, we can no more neglect being visible as Christians in this world than we can neglect public worship. The images of the New Jerusalem in our reading from the Book of Revelation remind us that on our journey to that new creation, we must find a home to prepare us for that experience. We cannot neglect God and our own soul's eternal destiny. Nor should we consider compromise when looking at our relationship with God or our eternal destiny. Truth and eternity, faith and true love must be unequivocal.

We get an unequivocal message from Jesus in today's Gospel passage which is part of Jesus' farewell address to His disciples. While it was spoken out loud, it is a passionate love letter, preparing the disciples for what they will endure after His Ascension. There is the reminder that they must remember the word spoken by Jesus is not only His, but that of the Father, that the Spirit will continue the teaching Jesus had begun, and that the words of peace spoken each time Jesus appeared after the resurrection is a true peace that will remain with them as long as they are faithful.

There are times when peace is greatly disturbed and times when peace is only slightly bothered. People become uncomfortable with change, or uncomfortable because there is not change. Sometimes people lack a sense of peace because they let things be "as is" and do not bring questions, suggestions, or problems to the surface. They think that they will just be a bother, or that no one will listen, or something like that.

Here is where today's Scriptures speak to us. Just as the Christians of Antioch spoke up, and new ways were found to welcome Gentiles into the Church, you have hopefully noticed over the last year the beginning of the parish commissions in our parish. These are not just some passing idea of the day or week, so to say. This a way to include ideas and participation of the entire Church family. The reports you have begun to receive at Masses are not ways to extend the length of Mass, but a way to keep you informed and offer opportunities to help your family thrive.

As you know from your families at home, the more you work and pray together to make a happy home, the better off things are. As you reflect this week on Jesus' farewell to His disciples and

His words, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you," remember peace is a fruit of Easter and God's love lives when we work to accept it and share it.

Examine your visibility as a Catholic Christian, as a parishioner of Nativity of the Lord Jesus. Even a little contribution of time and talent helps. Even one idea helps. We have just elected new members of our Parish Pastoral Council. The members of the Commissions are making reports regularly. There are suggestion boxes in the Narthex. Make your opinion known.

Most of all, know that Jesus' message to you, His disciples is, "Peace be with you."