

Homily – 5th Sunday of Easter A

Today's readings tell us how the early Church accepted the challenge of keeping Jesus' memory alive by remaining a dynamic Christian community, bearing witness to Christ by their unity, fidelity in worship and spirit of loving, humble service. Today's Gospel introduces Jesus as the Way to God, the Truth to be accepted, and the Life to be shared and lived.

The first reading, taken from Acts, shows us the early Church as a loving, serving, and worshipping community. Hence, it easily solved a problem of perceived discrimination by instituting the diaconate for the service of the community.

In the second reading, St. Peter advises the early Christians to renew the memory of Jesus by making their community a spiritual edifice built from the "living stones" of believers upon the "Living Cornerstone of Christ". Peter praises Christians, both Gentile and Jewish, as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God's own people." In today's Gospel, Jesus consoles his apostles (who are sad and disheartened at His announcement that He will be leaving them soon) by assuring them that he is going to prepare an everlasting accommodation for them in his Father's House in Heaven. He gives them the assurance that he will come back to take them to their Heavenly abodes. It is then that Thomas says, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus answers Thomas' question with, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me." The basic doctrine of Judaism is that Yahweh is the Way the Truth and the Life. Hence, Jesus is making a revolutionary claim that he is equivalent to Yahweh. Jesus also declares that he is the safest and surest way to God, discrediting the notions that all religions are equally sure ways to reach God, or that no organized religion but only living a good life of sharing love is necessary to reach God. Jesus, however, is the Way which he calls narrow because it is the way of focused, loving, humble, sacrificial service. Jesus is the Truth who teaches revealed truths about God and God's relation to man. Jesus also teaches moral truths by demonstrating them in his life. Jesus is the Life because, as God, he possesses the eternal life of God and shares his Divine life with his disciples through the Word of God and the Sacraments. In short, Jesus reveals the Father in the way he lives, in the truth of his word and in the new life that he brings.

Messages: We need to accept Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life: We accept Jesus as the Way by walking his narrow way of loving, humble, sacrificial service. We accept Jesus the Truth by learning and practicing what he has taught us, as given in the Bible and in the teachings of the Church. We share the Divine life of God through making use of the means Jesus has established in his Church: a) by actively participating in the Eucharistic celebration and properly receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion; b) by the worthy reception of the other Sacraments; c) by the meditative and daily reading of the Word of God; d) by allowing the Holy Spirit living in the Church and within us to guide and strengthen us; and e) by communicating with God the Source of Life, in personal and family prayers.