

5th Sunday of Easter, 10 May 2020

Gospel: John 14:1-12

Homily: Fr. Ken

In St. Luke's Acts of the Apostles, we learn how the early Church encountered the problem of the inequality of favoritism, and how they responded by appointing a group to ensure true equality for everyone.

In the First Letter of St. Peter, we learn that the early Church, greater than any physical stone structure, is made of living stones, all arranged close to one another and close of Jesus Christ, the cornerstone.

John's Gospel reveals to us the story of salvation history, of Jesus' suffering, death, and Resurrection, and his preparing a place for us.

In today's gospel, we are at the point at which trouble and heartbreak are about to erupt in the life of Jesus. Here, in his final conversation with his disciples, Jesus is fully aware that very soon sorrow and pain will be inflicted upon him. In conversation, he seeks to strengthen his friends in the face of the coming darkness. "Do not let your hearts be troubled", he tells them.

Very soon his own heart will be greatly troubled, as he prays in the garden of Gethsemane, knowing that his enemies are closing in. He will feel fear at the prospect of imminent suffering. Nobody escapes trouble and heartbreak. Nobody escapes from fear.

And yet there is a way out of these dark places, a path that takes us from heartache and pain to a place of joy and serenity. That heavenly place is the presence of God, and Jesus now tells us how to find our way. As his disciples are thrown into confusion, they begin to ask him questions. Two very important questions emerge: "Lord, where are you going?" and "How can we find the way there?"

The answers that Jesus gives are tremendous answers. He is going to God, and in following Jesus we will find our way there too. What follows seems to make nonsense of these statements, as Jesus is arrested, tortured, and put to death. But his rising to new life on Easter Sunday shows us the truth about who he really is. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Trouble and heartache come to everyone in this world, and in many different guises. On this very Sunday, peoples throughout Asia, Europe, Africa,

the Americas, and nearly everywhere around the globe, and especially in the United States, experience the physical, psychological, socio-political, and economic impact of the never before known coronavirus. With approximately 3.5 million cases and nearly 250,000 deaths from the virus, people's lives continue to be devastated by death and sickness, as well as the nearly complete disruption of the so-called normal everyday life.

People also experience trouble and heartache when they do not receive their human right to education. And there are other critical issues of social justice where people do not receive their share of bread in this world; issues of violence where people's lives are torn apart by bloodshed, as in the Middle East or the East Bay, and worldwide; issues of human relationships where jealousy and dishonesty drive families apart; issues of bereavement where people suddenly lose the ones they love.

The words of Jesus, spoken first to his disciples at the Last Supper, are repeated by Jesus to each of us today: "Do not let your hearts be troubled". The Lord himself is the reason why we are not to lose hope. His suffering, his death, and his resurrection speak to us of the victory over suffering that will come to us. But not by our own isolated efforts.

Today we hear what St. Peter has to say about the importance of others, about the importance of our religious faith community. The Lord is a living stone. And we can set ourselves close to him, in order to be built up into a strong and secure house of God. It is only by being set next to one another in the Lord that we can be strong. It is this precious love of God in our lives that will enable us to care for one another, and as a community of faith to care for everyone. To rescue the human heart from trouble is the great task that we can accomplish, as sisters and brothers of Jesus.