

5<sup>th</sup> Easter Sunday, 7 May 2023

Scriptures: Acts 6:1-7; 1 Peter 2:4-9; John 14:1-12

Homily: Fr. Ken

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

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

In the 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 as 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 Day shows us the truth about who he really is.

Trouble and heartbreak come to everyone in this world, and in many different ways. There are issues of injustice where people do not receive their share of education in this nation. This weekend, for example, marks the 69<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the famous Supreme Court decision in the case of Brown vs. the Board of Education, declaring racial segregation in schools to be unconstitutional.

There are other 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 in the East Bay; 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 to 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.

In these scripture readings, we hear what St. Peter has to say about the importance of others, about the importance of the Church. 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 Church to care for everyone. To rescue the human heart from trouble is the great work that we can do.

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