

HOMILY for 5th SUNDAY of EASTER – Year C

At the Congress of Nations, a dispute broke out about the nationality of Adam & Eve. “They were English,” stated the British delegate, “because only an Englishman would have been such a gentleman as to give his own rib to make a woman.”

“Mais non! (or, But, no!),” protested the French delegate. “Look at Adam’s elegance, even nude. He was a Frenchman for sure.”

The Israeli delegate demurred, pointing out that the Bible clearly stated that the Creation occurred in the Holy Land. “So, Adam & Eve were of the Chosen People; they were Jews.”

The Rumanian shook his head. “Adam & Eve could only have been Russian,” he maintained, “because only a Russian could eat so poorly, dress so badly, & still call it Paradise.”

As you can see, human viewpoints on any issue are numerous & diverse. And that’s ok because we need to respect everyone’s opinions. The problem arises when we follow the wrong opinions & settle for less. What am I talking about? In this Sunday’s Gospel, we learn that Jesus left with us these words of advice in His will. He said, “...My children, I am not going to be with you much longer. I give you a new Commandment: love one another.” He continues, “...This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another.” In other words, Jesus wants us to be “people of love” & nothing else! That word “love” MUST be connected with everything we say & do. We cannot call ourselves to be Christians or the disciples of Jesus if we do not live & act by His law of love.

Unfortunately, we have allowed our religious & political leaders to mislead us & turn us into people of their own visions. They have played us like a banjo & stirred us up to fight their battles. We’ve become their pawns & pledged our allegiance to them instead of our Lord Jesus. We’ve not felt ashamed for acting contrary to our Lord’s dying wish above. We’ve tried to rationalize our Christian actions like our religious & political leaders often do. So, in case we have NOT heard what Jesus told us in today’s Gospel & have allowed ourselves to get stuck in the political & cultural fights, let me repeat the dying wish of our Lord, “...I give you a new Commandment: Love one another... This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another.” If you do not make that to be your one & main focus of your Christian life & continue to waste your time & effort on the political & cultural warfare like our religious & political leaders would want you to do, maybe you might not consider yourself to be Jesus’ disciples. Moreover, don’t be surprised if Jesus would question about your practice of His Commandment of love on the Last Day. And please do not say that I as your pastor did not tell you so!

Most of conversations these days are about the War in Ukraine. We look at the way the Ukrainians defend themselves & continue to carry on their broken life with grace amidst the horror of war & atrocities committed against them & we admire them. We consider the Ukrainians the “courageous people.” On the contrary, we view Putin & his followers as the “most evil & horrible people” on earth based upon what they’ve done to their neighbors. The whole world sure does not want to be around them or associate with them in any way. On the other hand, the Polish have opened their border & homes to welcome many refugees & share basic needs with them. We thank God for people like the Polish hosts & think of them as the “hospitable folks.” Or, we might travel to Africa, Asia, or South America & feel blessed to be

treated with kindness & courtesy as their visitors. We refer to those hosts as “friendly & wonderful folks.” Or, we might take a trip to an undiscovered region of the world like the Amazon & see how those indigenous people who have very little possessions live their lives. They have somehow managed to share their meager resources with their neighbors & maintain a peaceful community. We tip our hat to these “joyful & content people” & want to learn from their way of life. Or, if an alien lands on America & sees all the fights in our country lately & the way we treat one another, what would it think about us Americans? How would it tell the rest of the Universe about our American society? I don’t know about you, but I really want an alien or history to remember us Americans as the “most generous & compassionate people” despite our mistakes in the past.

In this Sunday’s First Reading, Paul & Barnabas had to endure lots of trials & sufferings as they share the Good News of Jesus with the Gentiles. Their virtuous way of life & the ultimate goal of the Good News of Jesus were so attractive that the Gentiles could not resist to adopt it. Over the years, Jesus & His Christian Church have been able to draw millions of followers. Now, there’re over a billion of Catholics alone in the Christian Church. If our Christian Church had not offered to the world a better option than what it could find on earth, it would not have recruited any new member at all. If the early disciples did not make lots of personal sacrifices & do extraordinary things to attract new members, they would not have any future followers.

Ironically, our Christian Church in the twenty-first century does not care about recruiting new members for Jesus. All it cares about is more fights with one another & with the world. I do not know about you, but I’m worried about the membership & relevancy of the Church in the years ahead. Although I’m concerned about our Christian Church on earth, I’m more hopeful about the new world that Christ has prepared for it in Heaven. Here’s how John lets us have a glimpse of that new world in today’s Second Reading. He says, “I John saw new heavens & a new earth. The former heavens & the former earth had passed away... God shall wipe every tear from their eyes, & there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain.” My friends, that new world is the reward that Christ has prepared & promised to His faithful followers.

My dear brothers & sisters, we all want to do our own things & pay little attention to the common good. Moreover, our religious & political leaders have not followed the direction of the founders of our Christian faith & our country & worked hard for the common good either. Today, we’re reminded of what Jesus wanted us to do to be recognized as His Christian disciples. He called on us to be people of love & show the world our true Christian identity. By living out that wise advice of Jesus, hopefully we can attract more people to our Christian Church & help build a loving world right here on earth. Most importantly, we can also prepare our Christian Church to look forward the new Heaven & a new earth after this life.