

5th Sunday of Easter (A)
(Acts 6:1-7 / John 14:1-12)
10.05.2020

Dear brothers and sisters,

In the gospel passage we have just heard, the disciples are disturbed for many good reasons. Jesus has just foretold the betrayal of one of their number, Judas. Moreover, He is now hinting at his own imminent departure. Jesus then goes on to announce the forthcoming triple denial of Peter. All these predictions are more than enough to disturb the disciples.

What about us? Are we not disturbed by much of what we hear as our countries continue to fight against an invisible enemy in the form of Covid-19? The fact that there is no vaccine or treatment, the restrictions associated with social distancing which can seem to us to be unending, the disruption of work, suffering at home, in care homes and in hospitals, the multiple deaths we hear announced day after day... All these happenings legitimately leave many of us feeling deeply disturbed.

To his disciples of yesteryear and to us his disciples today, the Risen Lord says: **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You trust in God, trust also in me”**. The Risen Lord asks us to trust in Him. He wants to strengthen our faith in him. We are so good at trusting in ourselves at times, ready to hold on to and defend our particular point of view on certain issues, to rely on our own resources! We so love to be in control! The result is that it is often difficult for us to trust in others and to trust in ‘The Other’ par excellence, the Risen Lord! We need to be saved, to be cured, to be set free. We simply cannot do these things for ourselves! We need the help of others and above all the help of God to save our lives. The Lord alone can heal us, set us free and give us the true and everlasting peace our hearts and minds long for. The prophet Isaiah knew that what people need to do is to trust in the Lord. I quote; “Lord, you keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord for ever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock” (26,3-4). Left relying on ourselves alone, we are weak; we are quickly overwhelmed and left feeling depressed. With the help of others we are stronger. With God, we know peace, deep peace of mind and heart. Risen Lord, increase our trust in you!

The disciples lived with Jesus. When Jesus announced to them that he was leaving them, they were legitimately perturbed at the idea of being left alone. They felt they would become like orphans. To console them, Jesus told them that he was going to prepare a place for them. He would return to take them with him so that where He would go before them they would follow. The statement ‘The Lord with us today and for ever, and we with the Lord today and forever’ are key-words for our life of faith. The Risen Lord promises to remain with us whatever happens! This promise keeps the Church’s hope alive! We are afraid of the unknown, of a future we cannot imagine. Let us try to live our lives each day with Christ, sure that He will remain with us in the future, even the unknown and unimaginable future. He will be with us in every unexpected and challenging situation with which life confronts us.

The disciples had to accept Jesus’ temporary absence just as we have to accept that in the present pandemic Jesus can appear to be absent and even to have abandoned us. While this may be what

we feel, the fact is that Jesus never abandons us; Christ is always with us. We must recall that Christian discipleship is not about having cosy feelings but about living in naked faith! What matters is not to feel or not to feel, but the presence of the Lord by our side, to trust that the Lord is always with us, even if appearances seem to suggest the contrary.

We simply don't know what way the pandemic will evolve, how long it will last before a vaccine or treatments are found. We simply don't know who will fall prey to it, who in our entourage will die from it. But what we believe is that Jesus is and will remain with us. He will not remove the stones that litter the path of our lives but he will help us to deal with them; indeed he will lift us up and carry us over them. He will help us bear our cross! How often in the psalms we hear the psalmist calling to the Lord and the Lord comes to his help! The Lord does not sort out everything for us. He does not resolve all our problems for us, but he does help us to get through them

It is always helpful to take a bird's eye view of the situation in which we live. We came from the Father who created us out of love. Our life here on earth is a long pilgrimage by which we return to the Father in the hope of being received into his bosom anew to be held in an eternal embrace.

The way to the Father is Jesus himself who told us: "I am the way, the truth and the life". We believe that Jesus is the way because he is the Son who came to reveal the Father's love for all humanity, each person without exception; Jesus knows the Father and shows us the way to the Father. Jesus is the only way that leads to the Father because He is in the Father and the Father is in Him. The Father and the Son are one!

To walk the path of life with Jesus today, to pray to him today, to listen to his word and put it into practice today is the surest way to prepare us to live tomorrow, whatever tomorrow might bring. The communion between Jesus and his Father is an invitation for us to live our daily lives in communion with the Risen Lord. To live in Jesus is the surest way to return to the Father.

The Spirit of the Lord Jesus lives within us praying to the Father: 'Abba-Father', following the rhythm of our breathing. May we make the prayer of Jesus' Spirit our own and find peace of heart and mind in it! "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me." I am with you, I live within you now and forever. The Spirit of the Lord is praying not only within us, but within all our brothers and sisters in humanity who were also created out of love by the Father. The Spirit of the Lord establishes us in communion with each other. There is a solidarity between us all. We were not created to fight against one another, but to work together, to build up a world enriched by all our legitimate differences, a world in which we are not in dispute, but rather seeking to live at peace and in mutual respect.

Risen Lord, increase our faith in you as we journey through life! May we remain with you as you remain with us!

Amen.