

6th Sunday of Easter

Act 8:5-8, 1Peter 3:15-18, John 14:15-21

I was born and raised in Hawthorne, CA, a small lower-middle class city in Southwest Los Angeles. While I was in high school, Hawthorne was known for two things: first, the Beach Boys lived there and went to Hawthorne High School. Second, Hawthorne Blvd was the cruising capital of Southern California. A few years later, the setting was immortalized by George Lucas in the film, *American Graffiti*, with Harrison Ford, Ron Howard and Richard Dreyfus. *Yes, we were all young once*

My best friend in high school, Reed, loved to cruise. He would pick me up in his '49 Ford and we would go "cruzin'." His Ford was not a "cool car" at all; it was just old and cheap. When we were about to leave my house, my mom would **always say, "Have fun."** But, before we could get through the door, she would always add, **"And, be good!"**

Today's Gospel reminds me of those days. Jesus is speaking to His disciples at the end of the Last Supper. Jesus is ready to leave them, to go, and endure His Passion and Death.

This week, liturgically, He is leaving us again as we celebrate the Solemnity of His Ascension into heaven.

Before He leaves them, Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

During these days of the Easter Season, the Church takes us back many times to the Last Supper, giving us a chance to dig deeper into the meaning of Jesus' words. Throughout His Last Supper discourse, which is in John's Gospel, chapters 14-17. Jesus' constant **refrain** is, "if you love me, you will keep my commandment." He says that His commandment is to "**love one another as I have loved you**", it is the commandment of Christian charity, charity for **everyone**. These were his **parting words** to his closest disciples, the last flow of love from his Sacred Heart before His heart is broken and pierced. They are **special** words. We really need to **hear** them, to let them **sink** in. **This is God, Himself, speaking.**

Jesus knows that these twelve men are **normal**, fallen human beings. They are weak; they are ignorant; they are **stubborn**, and **they are headstrong**. And yet, He also knows that they **truly love him**. They do **want** to be His disciples.

We are just like them: flawed, but wanting to be disciples and to do His Will. I don't know if you noticed it or not, but, it is not easy! It's not easy to follow His Commandments. It's not easy to love everyone! It's not easy to forgive everyone who has hurt us.

Following God's Commandment wasn't easy for Adam and Eve, either, and they didn't even have original sin - at least until after they committed it. Before they sinned, they weren't even going to die; they didn't have to work; life was easy with no pain; they wouldn't get hungry, or sick, etc. etc. etc., Yet, they were seriously tempted by Satan; who said, "Eat the fruit, and be **like God**."

But God had told them, "Do not to eat of the tree in the center of the Garden, don't even touch it, or else you will die" (Yes, that is what He said in Scripture). Satan said, "You certainly will not die; you will be like gods. Taste it, decide for yourselves, make your own decisions, your own plans; don't **let Him** be the boss of you!" When Adam and Eve took Satan's lies, hook, line and sinker; they chose to decide what was right and what was wrong for themselves. Besides the fruit looked deliciously good. Adam and Eve sinned and threw the universe into chaos.

But God, Our Eternal, Loving Heavenly Father, who is Merciful and Just, had a Plan B. The Word, the 2nd Person of the Blessed Trinity, would assume our human nature and become man and He would die for us. After His Resurrection and Ascension, He would remain with us in His Church, His Mystical Body, in the sacraments, in His Word, in His priesthood and in us, His people.

But God's Plan B changed our world, too.

Now, we would grow old and die; we had to work, we had to work hard; life was hard, we would have pain; we would have to feed ourselves; we were still told to "be fruitful and multiply" but now with great pain and difficulty. We have all experienced the good and bad of Plan B, ever since the Garden of Eden was closed. If we have to suffer with the bad, should we not want to partake of the good, as well?

But, Satan had a Plan B, also, and His Plan B is becoming especially “fruitful” (pun intended) in our times. His low-hanging fruit and temptations are everywhere and quite obvious. We can slow aging and delay death, if we have enough money; there are so many antidotes for pain (physical pain, emotional pain, all pain), help yourself to it, legal or illegal - whenever you want. You don’t have to work; let someone else do it for you; we can have all the pleasure we want without consequences or responsibilities.; If you want something, take it. We don’t need religion; we don’t need truth; we will decide what’s true!! We will decide what is good; if we like it, it’s good. But, Satan says, “Just leave this Church and the fruit will taste much, much better.”

The Tree of the knowledge of good and evil still exists; it is all around us. It’s just outside those doors. It is filled with delicious and tempting fruit and it is very low-hanging. And, more than ever before, the World says it’s delicious and ours for the taking. The World says what was bad and evil is now good and what was truly good is now bad. The World says, “Just pick the fruit and take a nibble, trust us, you’ll like it!” But the World doesn’t tell us how addicting, how very addicting it is. Nor does the World tell you it is deadly poisonous.

The Church gives us the only antidote to Satan’s Plan B.

It’s right here.

If you’ve eaten the poison fruit, Reconciliation is the antidote.

To avoid the poison in the first place - come here and eat the Bread of Life.

When you leave, take the Bread of Life with you.

Be a Disciple of Christ;

Don’t follow the World, but love the people in the world

Be a follower of Christ. Who created us and Who gave His Life for us.

Leave your comfort zones, and help your neighbors

Build a better world

Be truthful, responsible, honest, pure and faithful even when it feels like we’re being crucified.

Evangelize others, not so much by words, but by loving and caring for them.

Be kind, be polite; be nice. Speak well of others.

Bring civility back to our world; don’t feed on gossip, scandal and bullying.

Do your share of the work

Be merciful and compassionate.

And pray for yourselves and all people, even those who hurt us.

Now, Let’s turn our minds towards these Sacred Mysteries and at the end of Mass

Go! Go out into the world and live and enjoy life...

And, be Good!