

5th Sunday Easter Year “A”

The stone that the builders rejected...

May 17-18, 2014

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

The Easter cycle of readings focuses on the tremendous growth of the early Church, a truly incredible story of rapid growth and development. Even in this process, there were those who rejected the message, those for whom the Good News was neither clear, nor accepted. It is no different in our own day, and this fact can serve as a real impetus for change, for inner conversion as well as an opportunity for evangelization.

We are the living stones, called to be part of a marvelous edifice of faith in the Church, each with our own unique and indispensable role to play. It is a realization that we are called to unity and communion, centered on Christ the cornerstone. We do this together. In 2007 Pope Benedict XVI wrote an encyclical entitled *Spe Salvi* in which he outlined the pitfalls of individualism in society and how that can also negatively impact the Church:

“...giving rise to a form of piety which sometimes emphasizes our private relationship with God at the expense of our calling to be members of a redeemed community. Yet from the beginning, God saw that "it is not good for man to be alone" (Gen 2:18). We were created as social beings who find fulfillment only in love – for God and for our neighbor. If we are truly to gaze upon him who is the source of our joy, we need to do so as members of the people of God (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 14).”¹

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The stone of course refers to Christ in this context, but we could also say that when people reject the Church, they are also in a very

¹ Vespers Address of Pope Benedict XVI to U.S. Bishops in Washington D.C., 16 April 2008.

real sense rejecting Christ, who is her head. While certainly there are many who have personal relationships with Christ apart from His Church, there is something incomplete about that relationship.

The growing divide between those who consider themselves religious and those who refer to themselves as spiritual is alarming. The entirety of the Acts of the Apostles lays out step by step the early first steps of the Church, not shielding from us its missteps. But it is the account of a community of faith, not a formless collection of individual believers. Rather, those believers were formed and molded into a strong force for good and transformation in the world. At the end of the first century A.D., there were fewer than ten thousand Christians in the Roman Empire– about the size of Little Canada. By 300 A.D., there were six million– about the size of the Houston Metro population. It grew exponentially from there.

“Have you been with me all this time Philip and you still do not know me?” The Lord’s question betrays his own dismay and one can easily sense the disappointment. But there will always be misunderstanding and even failure in the mission of the Gospel. This is why it is all the more important for us to ensure that we know Him. We do this through a regular life of prayer, Scripture reading and frequenting the Church’s sacraments.

It will always be a privilege to celebrate the sacraments, not just on the high Holy days of Easter or Christmas, but also in the heat of the summer, the dead of a cold winter. Every day, without fail, the Eucharist is offered, the grace of the sacraments made available.

So many avail themselves of the Sacrament of Penance each and every day here at the Cathedral. While at times it is tiring and we try to serve as many as possible during the allotted time, it is true that people know the value of the sacraments; they desire unity.

It is always a sure sign of the Holy Spirit when the Church gathers in prayer, centered on Jesus Christ. To truly “know him,” requires the willingness on our part to listen, to trust in the Holy Spirit’s guidance and to remain docile to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, worshipping in Spirit and in Truth. May Christ our Light be our guide.