

## CHAPLAIN'S BULLETIN      APRIL 24, 2022



Dear Folks,

As we continue the Easter season, we reflect on how to be an Easter people. Our Gospel today has two parts: the giving of peace and the Holy Spirit for the sake of reconciliation and showing Thomas something to help him believe. My thought on this is how we as Christians should be reconcilers, and that will help people believe. Jesus said to Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen, but have believed (John 20:29).” This does not mean they believe without reason. People may not see the wounds of Christ, but if they see that our behavior is different from the general population because of our faith, then they will have grounds to believe that what we say about Jesus is real.

One of the ways we can strive to be different is being better reconcilers and peacemakers. There is a lot that can be said about how to do that (and I have tried on different occasions). Easter is a good time to talk about how peace can grow from being less concerned with our own desires and more concerned with pleasing God.

St. Paul teaches, “If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above not what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:1-3) .”

If our desires are paramount, our desires will always get in the way of each other. “Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is it not from your passions that make war within your members? You covet but do not possess. You kill and envy, but you cannot obtain; you fight and wage war. You cannot possess because you do not ask. You ask but do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions (James 4:1-3).”

Even if we are fighting for God’s truth, against the forces of evil, we do it as people of faith. We can spend ourselves generously to build goodness without the desperation that comes from thinking it all depends on us. We remember people thinking they could save the world without God (I’m thinking of Hitler, Stalin, and Mao) who were sure they were building a better world and that they were so important that they should have no limitations. They killed millions because they thought the tradeoff was worth it. We do what we can do, careful to show that we love even those who oppose us, knowing that God Himself will bring about the victory. The greatness of our cause calls us to higher standards of behavior, not lower. Church people have done nasty stuff when they have forgotten that.

We remember that the ability to do this depends on the Holy Spirit. We are not just celebrating the great season of Easter (though that would be plenty in itself), but also preparing for the great feast of Pentecost. This is a time to reflect and consider how our relationship with the Holy Spirit is enabling us to live as an Easter people.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit (from Isaiah 11) are wisdom, understanding, knowledge, council, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord. The traditional explanations of the first four tend to be a bit subtle, but I think they boil down to knowing that God is more important than anything else, understanding how that affects the way we look at life, and what is life is truly of value, seeing how it all connects, and knowing how to respond. Fortitude is the strength actually to do what we now know we should do (based on the first four). Piety is a sense of awe toward God and attentiveness to Him. Fear of the Lord is, of course, not about fear in the usual sense, but a deep desire to be pleasing to God and a deep horror of displeasing Him.

The fruits of the Holy Spirit (from Galatians 5) are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. As we prepare for Pentecost, we can pray regularly for the Holy Spirit to increase these attributes in us, that we may better live as an Easter people, may better be peacemakers, and may better be witnesses of the Gospel to the world.

Alleluia!  
Fr Jim