

4th Sunday of Easter
May 8, 2022
“Surviving a World Beset with Problems”

Acts 13:14...52
Rev 7:9...17
Jn 10:27-30

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

We certainly live in troubled times. There is a great deal about which people can become discouraged and downhearted. Covid isolated and separated us – It has taken the lives of millions – Its variants continue to attack and disrupt lives.

Our republic is no longer governed by leaders who serve the common good. Instead, they are owned and controlled by individuals and corporations. And these are made up of the rich and the powerful. We are overwhelmed by information – But we don't really know what are truths, half-truths, or downright lies! There is even the prospect of a third World War – and the use of weapons of mass destruction!

Millions are refugees from the criminal war in Ukraine – Millions of others face starvation in Africa because no wheat can be grown in Ukraine. Inflation is rampant in America – The dollar is worth only 64% of what it was in 2002 – And every one of us has the personal suffering and hardship that is part of the human condition!

However, those who are believers –
– those who are Christians – ...
– those who truly try to live as disciples –
– can find the grace and the strength to survive whatever life brings.

The passage from the Acts of the Apostles shows us the power and the gift of mutual discipleship in Jesus. Paul and Barnabas had encouraging words of hope for all those who lived in a Godless world. They spoke of Jesus – They recounted his words and deeds – And they spoke of a life beyond the present. Jesus was the Son of God who came from another world – from the divine. Jesus suffered and died because he opposed the evil in the world – both material and spiritual!

However, the Jews of Antioch were threatened by the words of Paul and Barnabas. They were not able to move beyond their Old Testament customs and traditions. Consequently, they actively persecuted the two disciples and forced them out of the city.

Nevertheless, the formerly pagan Gentiles received the Gospel as truly Good News. It gave them hope in a world beset with problems. It promised a life after death – which many of the Jews could not accept. But Paul and Barnabas had met the Risen Jesus. They knew that he had conquered death and was alive! And their words had the persuasive power of eye-witnesses!

During his exile on the island of Patmos, St. John was given a revelation of what awaited all faithful disciples in the Kingdom of Heaven. There was a great multitude – The numbers were beyond counting – They were from every nation, race, people, and language – They wore white robes of holiness and carried palm branches of triumph and peace!

Furthermore, they would live lives of complete security and peace – There would be no more struggle to stay alive – Nor would there be sorrow, suffering, or pain in any form. For they would be immersed in the Glory of God – They would be nourished and sustained by God's presence, His life, and His love!

In the Gospel selection, Jesus has words of encouragement for every one of us. No matter how close are our family ties – No matter how many friends we have – No matter which community surrounds us – There is still that part of us that is all alone. It is that deepest part of ourselves that is beyond any expression.

Yet, Jesus knows every one of us. He knows our hidden, deepest selves. He likens himself to a good shepherd who knows every one of his sheep. If we follow him, he gives us eternal life – even now, in some mysterious way. We will never perish in his company. Moreover, no one and no thing can take us out of the possession of Jesus – no matter how hard others or the power of evil tries to do so.

The reason for our marvelous security is that God has given us to the care of Jesus. The Father is omnipotent – He is beyond any other power or force. Moreover, the Father and Jesus are one. They are united in the Godhead that is beyond human understanding!

And so, Brothers and Sisters, let us take heart. The forces of evil continue to beset us and the world around us. These forces are having negative effects upon everything material in our present day and world. But we need not be downcast or discouraged. We are known and possessed by Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. We have a glorious life that awaits us after our life here.

Let us pray that we always be faith-filled and faithful children of God –
brothers and sisters of Jesus, himself!

Amen.

May 8, 2022

Msgr. Russell G. Terra