

[Acts 15:1-1, 22-29; Psalm 67; Rev. 21:10-14; 22-23; John 14:23-29]

“Because there arose no little dissension.”

“The angel took me in spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.”

“Whoever loves Me will keep my Word, and my Father will love him, and We will come to Him and make our dwelling-place with him.”

“The Advocate, the Holy Spirit... will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.”

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.”

Each of these lines from our Sacred Scripture readings today teach us something about Jesus, about His people, the Church, and about ourselves.

How many of us have had arguments with each other? What were those arguments about? What is frustrating sometimes is when both sides think that they are right. Then you have a problem. Who is right? The one who is right is the one who searches for, finds, and shares the TRUTH. They do not embrace “Fake News!”

How do we handle things when we disagree with the Catholic Church about our teachings and practices? I used to struggle with that myself, even as a young priest. But I learned two things: First, Momma is never wrong. Whether that Momma is my Momma, the Blessed Mother whom we honor during this month of May, or, most importantly, Holy Mother Church. Second, I pray, “Holy Spirit, help me to understand why the Church says what She says and to submit to Her authority.” That’s what happens in today’s First Reading.

There was a problem in the early Church about an issue. When I was a young and foolish priest and had Mass with the kids from the parish school, the word “circumcision” came up a few times. The kids sat in the middle section of the church, and the elderly and retirees who came to Daily Mass sat on the sides. So, I asked these kids, second grade to fifth grade: “Does anybody here know what the word ‘circumcision’ means? There was a collective gasp from the grown-ups. “He’s not going to tell these innocent young kids what that word means, is he?” And then I said, “Ask your mom and dad when you get home!”

So the people in our First Reading who had the argument went up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and to the elders, to help them solve their problems. All of them submit their will, their intellect, their heart and their conscience. This is no blind obedience; it is an act of humility. As mature Christians with a well-formed conscience, we search for the truth together.

Once we work out our problems, at the end of time, our Guardian Angels lead us up the high mountain of this very altar of sacrifice and they show us the holy city of Jerusalem, this side of Heaven. When we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, this is the closest we are going to get to Heaven on this side of death. Imagine! Jesus is coming to you in His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. He comes to visit you in the house of your body. And He stays there until He dissolves and becomes one with you. How awesome is that?

Jesus says He has to leave His friends in today’s Gospel. Jesus is limited to what He can do and where He can go as long as He is on earth. But once He goes up to Heaven, He promises to

send us the Advocate – the One Who speaks on our behalf – the Holy Spirit. That is the Holy Spirit that is here, right now, in this church on this holy ground, in this people.

To learn about Jesus Christ and the Church He founded is a blessing. To stay in the Church is an act of the mind and of the will. Like love, it's a choice. And some of you made a deeper choice yesterday.

Spoiler alert: How do we encounter Christ? Usually, through other people. Often, through the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Mass.

How do we grow in our faith? Intelligent and inspiring homilies. Music that moves our soul. Stepping outside of our comfort zones in ministry and service. How do we witness? Simply by being the best version of ourselves that God created us to be.

When we take our faith seriously, it is a big and awesome job. But we do not live it out alone. The Holy Spirit, the Advocate, the Comforter, is there to help us. Call on that spirit and pray for the peace, which only He can give. Learn, read, pray. Then you and I can understand, teach, and guide others to Christ. To be that role model to advise and counsel and bring comfort, support and safety to others. I and the staff of St. Martin's are here to help you in your role as evangelizer. You are not alone. Be at peace.

The word that Jesus uses to speak about "peace" isn't just the absence of arguing and shouting, or the absence of war and violence. The word that Jesus uses, "shalom," meant to the Jews "I wish you everything that you need to be perfectly happy in this life." Jesus uses the word to mean; "May you understand yourself and your

relationship with God.” And when you have that understanding, that’s all you really need. But you have to learn, you have to read, you have to pray to get to that peace.

And finally, “love.” What is love? It is not an emotion. It is not a feeling. WHAT? True and lasting love is a CHOICE. I daily choose to let you into my life and into my heart. I daily choose to put your needs ahead of my own. I daily choose to make our relationship more important and a higher priority than that with our children. I daily choose to help get each other and those God sends our way into Heaven.

The relationship between Jesus and those He called was a gradual process. They went from being disciples, students, learners, into Apostles – men prepared to go out into the world and call others to Jesus Christ. Ultimately, Jesus calls them “friends” – those who love each other as Jesus and His Father love each other and who allow the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to live in their hearts and in their lives.

In that Spirit, I wish all of you “peace.” “Shalom.” I wish all of you the love of God. I wish you all the Way to Heaven. AMEN!
ALLELUIA!