

CELEBRATE EASTER

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Dear Lord, grant us the gift of serenity that we may patiently, gently and peacefully face life's many challenges.

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

Stephen was stoned to death, and he became the first Christian Martyr. Great persecution began led by Saul – many men and women were thrown into jail. However, the apostles with great courage and wisdom continued their mission of proclaiming the good news of the resurrection of Jesus, preaching God's Word and healing the sick. This excerpt tells us about Philip preaching in Samaria. We see the barriers between Jews and Samaritans breaking down in the early Church. This brought great joy to the apostles. Peter and John came down to Samaria to share this joy.

Be strong! Stand your ground! Be men and women of courage and hope and virtue and the good news of the risen Jesus.

Psalm 66

The Psalmist invites all people, not just the believing Israel, to shout joyfully to the Lord and sing him glorious praises. He marvels at the awesome deeds of the Lord and calls all people to be faithful to their promises and vows. God is so awesome and so powerful that his enemies have no chance, but cringe! He invites all people to come and see what God has done.

The Lord has not withheld his steadfast love from me, he says. This is a source of great joy. It is also a source of inspiration and strength. It is a challenge to reach out to others in love, "not to withhold" our love from others. We are called to give what we have received as gifts from the Lord.

It is never sufficient to abstain from wrong-doing or sin or evil. We are called to be good and to do good - a good word and a good deed proclaims who we are. We have many opportunities to share God's gift of Love and life. We meet people who are hurting and bleeding and needing a "transfusion" of love. Jesus tells us: Be merciful, be compassionate, be gentle. The following might help us to be and become more sensitive and compassionate as Jesus calls us to be:

**Shout joyfully to God all you on earth,
Sing praise to the glory of his name;
Proclaim his glorious praise...
Let all the earth worship and sing praise to you...**

1 Peter 3:15-18

Christians had to defend themselves and their faith in a hostile and suspicious world. Peter advised them to give “reasonable” and “intelligent” statement of faith and do it with “gentleness” and “reverence”. The real defense of faith is “clear conscience”, he said. Meet criticisms with a life beyond reproach.

Peter tells his readers and us today that it is better to suffer for doing right than for doing wrong, if it is God’s will.

John 14:15-21

The true test of love is obedience: “if you love me, keep my commandments...” Jesus promised to send the disciples and us a “helper”, “parakletos” to help us in our struggle with being disciples and being obedient to his commands.

“Parakletos” translated from Greek as “helper” is someone who is called in to give witness, to be an advocate, to be a support, to plead a cause, to give advice in difficult situation, to empower with new courage and spirit...someone who is called in to help in time of trouble or need.

“Parakletos” is often translated “comforter”. The word comforter, in its original sense, tells us what John means in this excerpt...Comforter is someone who enabled or empowered dispirited people to be brave, to be courageous...the word comfort has its roots in the Latin word “fortis” meaning “brave” or courageous.

The Holy Spirit is sent to take away our inadequacies and enable or empower us to cope with life situations. Jesus tells us that the world cannot recognize the Holy Spirit...we can see only what we are open to seeing.

This excerpt, once again, reminds us that our security is in our obedience to Christ and his way. Those who love him will obey him and those who obey him will find security in him. Obedience is the only proof of love. Obedient, trusting, confident love leads us to ultimate security. Obedient, trusting, confident relationship leads us to deeper knowledge and experience of God.

The Holy Spirit is given to us to enable or empower us to joyfully live our life of obedience to God and God’s ways.

Saint of the Day, May 10 - St. Damien de Veuster and 17 other saints are remembered this day.

Joseph de Veuster was born in Tremelo, Belgium in 1840. He was forced to quit school at age 13 to work on the family farm. He entered the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts

of Jesus and Mary six years later and took the name Damien. He volunteered to take the place of his brother, a priest of the same religious congregation, who was unable to go to the Hawaiian Islands because of illness. In May 1864, two months after arriving in his new mission, Damien was ordained a priest in Honolulu and assigned to the island of Hawaii.

The Kingdom of Hawaii was struggling with a public health crisis from infectious diseases coming to the islands from Europe and Asia. One of the diseases was leprosy, or Hansen's disease. In 1865, fear of the disease resulted in a law that required leprosy patients to live in the settlement colony of Kalaupapa on the island of Molakai.

In 1873 Father Damien volunteered to go to Kalaupapa permanently as the priest for the lepers. He cared for their physical, medical, and spiritual needs. He nursed the sick, built homes and furniture, made coffins, and dug graves. He also established leadership within their community. In time, he became their most effective advocate to obtain promised government support. Morale improved considerably. A few years later, he succeeded in getting the Franciscan Sisters of Syracuse, led by Mother Marianne Cope, to help staff this colony in Kalaupapa.

Fr. Damien contracted leprosy and died of its complications on March 30, 1889. He was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on October 11, 2009.

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