

Solemnity of Pentecost, Cycle C May 23, 2010

Readings: Acts 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13; John 14:15-16, 23b-26

Christ is Our Rest and Consolation

Every day we are bombarded with new information, facts, and stories. We have to make choices about what to believe because some of what we hear seems very incredible. We see videos on YouTube that we think might be computer generated because it's hard to believe that the event actually took place. We receive forwarded emails that make outlandish claims and we must decide on their credibility before we can forward them to our friends in good conscience. We hear claims about extraterrestrial aliens, about global warming and, now more recently, global cooling. We hear stories and watch movies that talk about the impending end of the world. We have to test the information and determine what we should believe.

We have all heard the fantastic story of how God revealed Himself to mankind through a book we call the Bible which contains some pretty hard-to-believe stories. It tells about how God sent His only Son, Jesus, to be one of us, to die on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. That Jesus would rise from the dead and ascend into heaven. We read that we can become adopted children of God through baptism and become heirs to eternal life in heaven if we follow God's commandments. This is a pretty incredible story; one that we could argue is much more difficult to believe than much of the crazy stuff we read on the internet.

But all of us are here this morning because we believe that the story is true. And our source of belief is the Holy Spirit. We heard St. Paul tell the Corinthians: "***No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit.***" The Holy Spirit acting in us gives us the strength and wisdom to claim that Jesus is Lord and to accept the whole story of salvation history.

St Paul says: "***To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.***" The Holy Spirit manifests Himself in each of us in different ways, and we all respond to His presence in different ways at different times in our lives. Sometimes we ignore His presence for certain stretches of time. And maybe we know of friends and relatives who seem to be asleep and unresponsive to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. They may be more likely to believe in aliens from space than in the love of Jesus. They cannot yet say, "***Jesus is Lord.***" We need to pray that their hearts be softened. We must be good witnesses for sure. But it is only through the Holy Spirit that they can be lead to the truth.

And for us who already claim to believe the story, we need to pray to the Holy Spirit for the strength to live that faith. If we follow the commandments, Jesus told us in this morning's gospel: "***I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always.***" That advocate is the Holy Spirit. It is a little bit of a great cycle. We accept Jesus at the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Then, as we follow Jesus, we receive a greater abundance of the Spirit that allows us to follow and serve even better. And in this way we grow spiritually; we grow in holiness.

Though our faith, we believe that Jesus came as our Savior and that He will come again at the end of time. But, St. Bernard talks about a third, an invisible coming of Jesus, that occurs to each of us individually and which falls between the other two. He says about the three comings of Christ: "***In the first, Christ was our redemption; in the last, he will appear as our life; in this middle coming, he is our rest and consolation.***" St. Bernard's idea of this third intermediate

coming is based on this morning's gospel. Jesus says: ***“Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.”***

Jesus, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, will come to dwell with us and bring us rest and consolation if only we keep His word. And our faith will grow stronger day by day. Let the Holy Spirit guide you and give you wisdom and strength to know and follow God's will in your life.

Deacon Joe Hulway