

4th Sunday of Easter, Cycle C April 25, 2010

Readings: Acts 13:14, 43-52; Revelation 7:9, 14b-17; John 10:27-30

Do You Belong to His Flock?

We heard in our first reading this morning from the Acts of the Apostles that Paul and Barnabas: ***“Entered the synagogue and took their seats.”*** They didn’t just take any old seats. It struck me as funny when I read this the other day because I thought about how some things don’t change, how since the very beginnings of the Church we still come and take the same seats every week, as if they were our own seats. I can look out and know just where everyone will be sitting each Sunday. You should all get together one Sunday and agree to sit in different places. And then you can sit back and watch the confusion on Father’s face and mine as we turn to face the congregation at the beginning of Mass.

But on a serious note, our reading reminds us that the disciples were Jews and they continued to go the synagogue and study scripture, comparable to our Liturgy of the Word. They would then go to someone’s home for the breaking of the bread, it was the origin of our Liturgy of the Eucharist. Jesus came first to His own Jewish people, but most, especially the leaders, did not recognize Him or hear His voice. At the synagogue, Paul preaches to the Jews about how Jesus was the fulfillment of the scriptures; that He is the Messiah.

The preaching of Paul and Barnabas attracted many of the Jews, but also many of the Gentiles. When the Jewish leaders saw the crowds of Gentiles coming to hear the good news and the promise of eternal life being preached to them, they became jealous and incited the crowds to drive Paul and Barnabas away.

The Jewish leaders were jealous, but Jesus came to save all mankind. We hear this also in the second reading in the vision that St. John had while he was in exile on the island of Patmos. We heard: ***“I, John, had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands.”*** Jesus calls all of us, but will we listen?

Jesus is both the Lamb and the Shepherd. Jesus is the Lamb, He is one of us, only innocent, and He is the Shepherd, our ruler who sits upon the throne, but who came to us to lead us and guide us. But will we listen?

In our gospel this morning, Jesus says: ***“My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”*** Jesus knows and loves us, but do we know Him? To truly know God is to love Him. We are called to hear the Good News by faith, but we come to know Jesus through love. St. Gregory the Great preached some words that we can still consider today. He said: ***“Ask yourselves whether you belong to his flock, whether you know him, whether the light of his truth shines in your minds. I assure you that it is not by faith that you will come to know him, but by love; not by mere conviction, but by action.”***

Jesus knows all of us. He loves all of us. He speaks the same message to all mankind. The difference is not Jesus’ relationship with us, it is in our relationship with Him. He wants all of us to be a part of His flock, but will we listen to His voice and follow where

He leads us. Will we try to truly know Him so that we will love Him. And if we truly know and love Him, it should be obvious by our actions. So again let us consider St. Gregory's words: ***"Ask yourselves whether you belong to his flock, whether you know him, whether the light of his truth shines in your minds."***

Jesus promises to lead us to eternal life, but He never said the journey was going to be an easy one. If we have faith in Jesus, if we know Him and love Him, we will listen to His voice and follow Him on the path that leads to Heaven and will not despair when we encounter troubles along the way. We will be willing to take the narrow path that isn't always easy to follow, because we have faith in where it leads.

I would like to leave you with one of my all time favorite quotes which is also from St. Gregory the Great. I've shared it in the past, but want to share it one more time because it helps put our journey in perspective. It reminds us to keep our eye on the destination and not on the bumps and obstacles, or even pleasant distractions, we encounter on the way. And here is the quote: ***"Anyone who is determined to reach his destination is not deterred by the roughness of the road that leads to it. Nor must we allow the charm of success to seduce us, or we shall be like a foolish traveler who is so distracted by the pleasant meadows through which he is passing that he forgets where he is going."***

Through all the bad times, and during the good times, do not forget where you are going.

Deacon Joe Hulway