

EASTER 7 – 2020

Acts 1:12-14

1Pet 4:13-16

Jn 17:1-11

Last Thursday we celebrated the Ascension of Jesus after which the disciples returned to Jerusalem to wait for the promised gift God's Spirit. This group included the apostles, Our Lady and other men and women. They would no doubt be reflecting deeply on the recent events they had experienced.

During the Last Supper, Jesus consecrates himself to the Father as a sacrificial offering of atonement for the sins of the world. On the Cross, Jesus is not only the sacrifice, but also the High Priest offering the sacrifice. Although he is no longer physically present with us, he is still present to us in many differing ways and particularly so when the faithful gather together with their priest in order to re-present the sacrifice that Jesus offered on Calvary. Receiving Christ's precious body and blood during the mass is the sign of the unity that exists between Christ and his disciples and the unity the faithful have with each other. Receiving communion during the mass is not the way **to create** unity between those who profess to have some belief in Jesus. It is the sign of the 'common union' of baptism, belief and obedience to Christ that already exists between those who gather together for mass.

In his prayer at the Last Supper, known as the High Priestly prayer, Jesus gathers his disciples up into his sacrifice and prays not only for them, but for all who come to believe that the Father sent the Son to reveal who God is. During each mass the priest says, Pray brethren that my sacrifice **and yours** may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty. The faithful respond by praying that God will receive it for the praise and glory of his name, for their good and that of the whole Church. The offering of the bread and wine becomes in the words of Justin Martyr, "the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh" (1 Apol 66).

The ascended Jesus continues to pray for those that the Father has given him, and that means each one of us. This is not because Jesus has nothing else to do, but so that we might become his faithful agents in the world.

Our second reading confirms that that the hostility Jesus endured began for the Church at the first Pentecost and has gone on ever since. The reason for this is because whenever the gospel is preached many of the world's values are challenged. In his recently published biography, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI says that currently the Catholic Church is threatened by a "worldwide dictatorship of humanist ideologies," listing the social engineering agenda in particular. He goes on to say that, "Modern society is in the process of formulating an anti-Christian creed, and resisting this creed is punished by social excommunication."

Governments are going to great lengths in the current pandemic to save lives, while at the same time enabling abortions to be self-induced at home. The elderly are encouraged to self-isolate to protect themselves while legislation is being introduced to permit euthanasia for anyone who requests it even though they are not terminally sick in uncontrollable pain. In the name of equality, gender laws re-defining human relationships are dissolving the

understanding of man, woman and the family as understood by the Church to be God's plan for creation.

Notwithstanding the self-inflicted suffering, the crisis the Church is facing is a crisis of faith. Many Catholics, even those who still attend mass, no longer believe or practice the teaching of the Church. You need look no further than read the demands that 'Catholics for Reform' are demanding from the Plenary Council. As Benedict XVI points out, this crisis of faith has led to a crisis of Christian existence.

The renewal we must pray for is not for the Church to become relevant to humanistic societies, but to stand firm in the Faith and courageously bear witness to what God has revealed of himself in and through Jesus Christ and the faithful agents of Jesus in the Church through the ages. Jesus called us to himself so that the world may know who God is and that his truth might be believed. That has always been, and still is, our mission.

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