

Fr. Jeff's Weekly Homily

5th Sunday of Easter
April 20, 2008

READING 1: Acts 6:1-7

the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews

Psalm 33

Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

READING 2: 1 Peter 2: 4-9

like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL: John 14: 1-12

Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father.”

This has been a very Catholic week! Pope Benedict XVI has been visiting Washington, D.C., and New York and giving brief, succinct and very pastoral talks to various groups. He has affirmed our American history, while acknowledging our sinful treatment of the Native Americans and African slaves, as a constant movement toward freedom and justice. He has repeatedly expressed shame and apologized for the clergy abuse and he met with victims of clergy abuse and he has promised determined vigilance. The ancient prayer we sing as “Holy, Holy, Holy” in its Latin form ended with “*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domine*” which besides the usual translation “blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” could also be translated: “*Benedict, who comes in the name of the Lord.*” He certainly has this week!

Our first reading today suggests that all was not well in the earliest days of our Catholic church. There was clearly a Hebrew Aramaic speaking faction and a Hellenistic Greek speaking faction. Faith kept them together. There are still factions in the Church, obviously it is part of the human condition, and Pope Benedict counsels mutual respect, acceptance of differences and hope.

Peter, in our second reading assures us the Church is not about buildings of stone but about the living people of God. Pope Benedict spoke of the stained glass windows in St. Patrick Cathedral, apparently dark and filthy for those outside, but radiant as the

sun streams through them to the inside. The church may look darkened by those who do not come inside but, inside, we experience the radiance of Jesus Christ alive in our communities.

Our Gospel expresses our reality. The Father is made manifest in Jesus of Nazareth and through him we see that the Father is Love. Jesus said believe because you know me or believe because of the works I do. My friends Pope Benedict reminds us that we do believe in Jesus and if people don't see that in us, they can see it in the works we have done and continue to do in his name in our schools, hospitals, parishes and continuous outreach to the poor, the sighing, the dying in the world. ***“The present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads toward a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey.”*** (Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*)

The single goal that is great enough to justify the effort is the spectacular movement within the human who comes to know God and thereby receives assured hope that heaven is not empty or emptiness. I have a friend who is ten years younger than I am and he likes to tease me about it. We were walking on the beach and he said, “How does it feel to be ten years closer to glory?” ...When you think of it that way, it feels like good news!

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