

Sunday Message

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

THE WORD

Year A • 7 May 2023 • Psalter Week 1



REFLECT

In the second reading, St Peter provides a beautiful description of who we are as Christians. He tells us that we are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart”. (It’s a description that has been incorporated into one of the prefaces of the Mass.)

These words sum up who we are and what we have become by virtue of our baptism. They bring home to us what a grace and privilege it is to be “chosen”, “consecrated”, “set apart” by God. We are royalty; we are special.

These are immensely consoling and reassuring words because they tell us that’s how God sees us and values us. God has chosen us, consecrated us, set us apart. And because that’s how God sees us, it’s how we are called to see others and ourselves too.

These are also challenging words because they demand that we live like people who are chosen, priestly, set apart. Everything that we do must reflect the status that God has given us. ■

Today’s Gospel is taken from the last of the great discourses in John’s Gospel. It is known as the Farewell Discourse and is the final teaching Jesus delivers to his disciples at the Last Supper.

Jesus’ farewell message looks to the future. He offers words of comfort to those he is leaving behind. They are to trust in God as he did. They will be reunited in the Father’s house. In ancient times, when a group of travellers needed accommodation for the night, they often sent one of their number ahead to reserve a place in the inn. He comforts them by telling them that the accommodation in the Father’s house is more luxurious than that of a rough and ready inn. It has many rooms, so they shouldn’t worry about being refused entry. He will return when the place is prepared and take them with him.

Some of the disciples are puzzled. If they don’t know where Jesus is going, Thomas asks, how will they find the way? Jesus replies with one of the great “I AM” sayings: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no one can come to the Father except through me.” Just as he is the gate that offers protection and freedom of movement for his flock to the pastures of eternal life, he is also the way to God. To have known Jesus is to know the Father.

This prompts another reply, this time from Philip. For Philip, it would be enough just to see the Father. Philip may be echoing a story about Moses. Even when God appeared to him on Mount Sinai, Moses never saw God’s face. The Jews believed that humans could not see God. The sight was so powerful they could not endure it, so the Lord usually made himself present through symbols like fire or a thick cloud. Moses begged to be allowed to see God’s face. As a special privilege, Moses was allowed to stand in a cleft of the rock and to see God’s back as he departed from the mountain (Ex 33:18-23).

Seen in this light, Philip’s request that they be allowed to see the Father is breathtaking. But Jesus’ reply would be even more breathtaking for a Jewish audience: to have seen Jesus is to have seen the Father. This can only be understood in the light of the opening hymn of John’s Gospel (Jn 1:1-18). Jesus is the Word of God who has taken flesh and dwelt among us. He has allowed God’s glory to shine in the world through his presence among us. ■

PRAY

Today’s Gospel is very popular at funerals. Pray for your deceased loved ones, that they may be enjoying eternal life in the Father’s house.

SAY

“Lord, help me to follow your way, live your truth, and model my life on yours. Amen.”

LEARN

If we want to know what God is like, we need look no further than Jesus

Jesus shows us the way to salvation

God has made us a chosen race, a royal priesthood

DO

Look at yourself in the mirror. Try to see yourself as God sees you.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

O sing a new song to the Lord,
for he has worked wonders;
in the sight of the nations
he has shown his deliverance, alleluia.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the
Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
constantly accomplish the Paschal Mystery
within us,
that those you were pleased to make new in
Holy Baptism
may, under your protective care, bear much
fruit
and come to the joys of life eternal.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Acts 6:1-7

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

About this time, when the number of
disciples was increasing, the Hellenists
made a complaint against the Hebrews: in
the daily distribution their own widows were
being overlooked. So the Twelve called a
full meeting of the disciples and addressed
them, "It would not be right for us to neglect
the word of God so as to give out food; you,
brothers, must select from among yourselves
seven men of good reputation, filled with the
Spirit and with wisdom; we will hand over
this duty to them, and continue to devote
ourselves to prayer and to the service of the
word." The whole assembly approved of
this proposal and elected Stephen, a man
full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, together
with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon,
Parmenas, and Nicolaus of Antioch, a convert
to Judaism. They presented these to the
apostles, who prayed and laid their hands
on them. The word of the Lord continued to
spread: the number of disciples in Jerusalem
was greatly increased, and a large group of
priests made their submission to the faith.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 32

Response:

May your love be upon us, O Lord,
as we place all our hope in you.

Or Alleluia!

1. Ring out your joy to the Lord, O you just;
for praise is fitting for loyal hearts.
Give thanks to the Lord upon the harp,
with a ten-stringed lute sing him songs. (R.)
2. For the word of the Lord is faithful
and all his works to be trusted.
The Lord loves justice and right
and fills the earth with his love. (R.)
3. The Lord looks on those who revere him,
on those who hope in his love,
to rescue their souls from death,
to keep them alive in famine. (R.)

SECOND READING

1 Peter 2:4-9

A reading from the first letter of St Peter.

The Lord is the living stone, rejected by men
but chosen by God and precious to him;
set yourselves close to him so that you too,
the holy priesthood that offers the spiritual
sacrifices which Jesus Christ has made
acceptable to God, may be living stones
making a spiritual house. As scripture says:
See how I lay in Zion a precious cornerstone
that I have chosen and the man who rests
his trust on it will not be disappointed. That
means that for you who are believers, it
is precious; but for unbelievers, the stone
rejected by the builders has proved to be
the keystone, a stone to stumble over, a
rock to bring men down. They stumble
over it because they do not believe in the
word; it was the fate in store for them. But
you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a
consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing
the praises of God who called you out of the
darkness into his wonderful light.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus said: "I am the Way, the Truth and the
Life.

No one can come to the Father except
through me."

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 14:1-12

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled.
Trust in God still, and trust in me.
There are many rooms in my Father's house;
if there were not, I should have told you.
I am now going to prepare a place for you,
and after I have gone and prepared you a
place,
I shall return to take you with me;
so that where I am you may be too.
You know the way to the place where I am
going."

Thomas said, "Lord, we do not know where
you are going, so how can we know the
way?" Jesus said:

"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.
No one can come to the Father except
through me.

If you know me, you know my Father too.

From this moment you know him and have
seen him."

Philip said, "Lord, let us see the Father and
then we shall be satisfied."

"Have I been with you all this time, Philip,"
said Jesus to him "and you still do not know
me?"

"To have seen me is to have seen the Father,
so how can you say, "Let us see the Father?"
Do you not believe that I am in the Father and
the Father is in me?"

The words I say to you I do not speak as
from myself:
it is the Father, living in me, who is doing
this work.

You must believe me when I say
that I am in the Father and the Father is in
me;
believe it on the evidence of this work, if for
no other reason.

"I tell you most solemnly,
whoever believes in me
will perform the same works as I do myself,
he will perform even greater works,
because I am going to the Father."

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O God, who by the wonderful exchange
effected in this sacrifice
have made us partakers of the one supreme
Godhead,
grant, we pray,
that, as we have come to know your truth,
we may make it ours by a worthy way of life.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

I am the true vine and you are the branches,
says the Lord.
Whoever remains in me, and I in him, bears
fruit in plenty, alleluia.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Graciously be present to your people, we
pray, O Lord,
and lead those you have imbued with
heavenly mysteries
to pass from former ways to newness of life.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

