

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Sunday after the Ascension

Sunday May 16, 2021

Year B

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; Psalm 1; 1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19

By: Armando Barrios

" I am asking on their behalf "

Let us pray.....

My brothers and sisters in Christ, today we are on the last Sunday of Easter and next Sunday, we will begin the Pentecost Season. I remind you that Easter is not only celebrated on a single Sunday, but it is seven consecutive Sundays. Today is the Seventh Sunday of Easter, where we conclude the Easter Season and begin as I said before the Season of Pentecost.

In ancient times the Jews celebrated Passover on seven consecutive Sundays, today almost nobody does, and last Thursday we celebrated the Ascension of Jesus, perhaps some of you are wondering, why is Armando talking about the Jewish celebration? or Ascension Thursday?

The answer is simple; I have noticed that many of us come to Church with the idea of listening to the readings, listening to the Holy Gospel, the sermon, exchange the peace although now we do this from our seats. We come to receive Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, but many of us do not know what liturgical day it is or in which liturgical season we are. Let me tell you that it is not enough to come to Church, sit, get up, kneel, sing, pray and return to our homes as if we had gone to a movie theater.

I could almost assure you that, when we go to the cinema, we first find out which movie we are going to see, what time it starts and what time it ends, who the actors are, if the movie is for the whole family or only for adults. So why don't we do the same when we come to church? Why don't we take time to get informed? This is something that I just wanted to share with all of you so that you could consider.

Today's Gospel tells us how important prayer is. Jesus himself prayed repeatedly, but this time he prayed for his disciples, and he prayed in this way in verse 6: "to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word." The disciples of Jesus

were called by Him and they followed Him, but they were chosen by the Father. Now the question is this, how many of us have heard the call of Jesus and have not followed Him? But if you heard the call of Jesus and followed it, then you were chosen by the Father to fulfill a mission in this world.

In verse 10, Jesus tells the Father “All mine are yours, and yours are mine.” but what is even more interesting about this verse is the following “and I have been glorified in them.” Jesus is referring to his disciples. But what do these last words mean? It means that the disciples, after having heard The Word, and having recognized Jesus as the Son of God, became representatives of Jesus before the people and the whole world.

Again, I have another question for you, how many of us can truly say that wherever we are we represent Jesus? To say that we are Christians is not to represent Jesus, because to represent Jesus is much more than that. To represent Jesus is to be generous, to be kind, it is to have compassion, I remind you of the only commandment of Jesus, from the gospel of John 13:34, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have

loved you.” If you fulfill this commandment, then you are a good representative of Jesus.

In verse 11, Jesus continues praying in this way: “And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.” Jesus in this verse, refers to his Ascension into Heaven, but asks the Father to take care of his disciples in the same way that he did while he was with them. In doing so Jesus guarantees that his disciples are united to him as he is in perfect union with the Father.

In verse 14, Jesus speaks of the hatred that the world feels for his disciples because they heard his Word and followed Him. Something very similar has happened to many of us at some point, sometimes people criticize us and speak wrong about us because we consecrate Sundays to listen to The Word of God. And now in this pandemic, we consecrate mornings or evenings to be together in prayer on Zoom. What is also sad is that, on many occasions the people who criticize us and speak against us are people of our own family. They do not understand why they are still in the world; they do not realize

that when they are in the world, they are easy prey to the temptations of the evil one.

In verse 15, Jesus asks the Father not to take his disciples out of the world, but “to protect them from the evil one”. The evil that Jesus refers are the temptations that the evil one disguises in many ways, and disguises them according to each person. Some examples are those who like alcohol, it is disguised as a fictitious joy that only lasts while the person is intoxicated; for adulterers, there is the disguise of a pretty woman or handsome man; and for those who feel or believe they are good, there is the disguise of a false generosity and goodness that they only do so that people see them. Like the Pharisee who criticized the publican before the altar of God (Luke 18:11), "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector," this is a false person disguised as kind and just.

And finally in verse 17, Jesus asks the Father to consecrate his disciples through the truth. This is something very interesting and at the same time difficult for anyone of us to fulfill. During the Eucharist, common bread and wine are consecrated, and they are consecrated through prayer, but above all

through faith, and at that very moment, they cease to be common elements for they now have become the Body and Blood of Christ.

Remembering his death, resurrection and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them with your Holy Spirit, and that is how the Body and Blood of your Son will be for your people; sanctify us also. This is the difficult part to fulfill, since when we ask God to sanctify us, we are asking Him to consecrate us to separate us from the world to be faithful to Him and always be only at His service. The difficult thing is not to make said request, it is difficult to fulfill said request. From Ecclesiastes 5:4, "When you make a vow to God, do not delay fulfilling it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Fulfill what you vow."

My brothers and sisters in Christ, I remind you that when we promise something to God, it must come from our hearts and not just from our lips, and it is better not to promise, than to promise and not fulfill.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.