



# ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

*"Our mission is to bring the good news of Jesus Christ's love to our entire community through traditional Anglo-Catholic worship, fellowship, outreach, and Christian formation."*

**Our Vision:** *"We strive to be a haven of healing, reconciliation, joy and peace in service to our wider community and beyond, so that our example in prayer and practice may reflect Christ's love for us all."*

## THIS SUNDAY May 17 & BEYOND

### USING CURRENT THINKING WISELY TO PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS



The reading from the Book of Acts for this 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter in Year A (Acts 17: 22-31) tells us about Paul's address to the Athenians in the Areopagus. This is one of the instances where Paul's wit and eloquence in the service of his Evangelistic mission is most prominent. And it clearly shows us that there is nothing wrong with using our knowledge of the current trends in people's way of thinking to present the Good News, as long as it remains clear what the Good News is about.

What Paul does is to use the religious and philosophical background of the Athenians to present his argument in favor of God's redemptive work in Jesus Christ. He starts by acknowledging the great religiousness of the Athenians, even though he was not at all in agreement with their pagan worship. Then he refers to this altar dedicated to "an unknown god". In their zeal not to leave any deity unacknowledged, so to speak, the Athenians had gone this far.

Paul wittingly links this "unknown god" to the only true God. He then makes clear that the true God is the creator of all that exists and has no need of anything, not even shrines. Here God's transcendent character is emphasized. But then he

eloquently speaks about God's permanent intention to be found by us humans, and makes reference to His immanence. To support this idea, he even quotes two prominent Greek poets, Epimenides and Artaus. The former, referring to Zeus, had stated that "in him we live and move and have our being". And the latter had referred to this same deity as the ancestor of all humans, by saying "for we too are his offspring".

Zeus was considered to be the leading deity, the major god among the other Greek deities. Some philosophers, like the above mentioned poets, had objected to the popular worship of this God with the use of statues and anthropomorphic images. In a way, they had seen in this leading god a prototype similar to the Hebrew God, as creator and father of the human race. As such, it was only logical to discard the idea that the deity could be worshiped in images formed by the art and imagination of mortals. This is how Paul uses his knowledge of Greek philosophy to present his argument against idolatry.

He then goes on to present the idea that God has not condemned them, but overlooked their ignorance, and He now commands all people to repent and acknowledge that salvation comes through the Risen Christ only.

Paul is not conforming to the Greek religious and philosophical notions. He clearly presents what the true message of salvation is. As a result of his address to the Athenians, a few of them believed and most of them heard him only until he mentioned the resurrection of the dead. Some mockingly told him "they would hear him about this some other time". Changing people's minds has never been easy. Athenians had a long tradition of religious beliefs and philosophical thinking, and they took their beliefs seriously. They were eager to hear arguments and counter arguments, but changing their viewpoints would not come easy.

Today we live in a very skeptical secular society. Christian values and beliefs that some decades ago were taken for granted, are not anymore. In a way, present-day Christians face a situation that resembles that of the first Christians. The society they lived in was not "Christian". They had to proclaim the Good News in a hostile environment, opposing a variety of religious and philosophical traditions of the time. They even suffered persecution and martyrdom.

Most of us will not suffer persecution and martyrdom for our proclamation. In some parts of the world, this is still the case, even now. But we must proclaim the Good News in an environment that not only offers a variety of religious and philosophical thinking, but even worse, in a society where a significant number of people simply do not show any interested in a transcendental quest. They are just interested in getting

the most out of the material life they consider to be the only life. And this is really sad.

So it will do no harm if we follow Paul's example. Paul became familiar with the religious and philosophical background of the people he was taking the Good News to. He not only observed carefully. He read. He studied. He was a learned man. He had a vast knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures, but he did not limit his knowledge to that.

Proclaiming the Gospel in today's world is a challenge. If we limit ourselves to be familiar with the Bible and its interpretation, we are very unlikely to reach those outside the group of Christians that have been attending our churches for years now. But Jesus' great commission was to go out and preach the Gospel to all the nations. We have been given that uncomfortable task. In spite of all appearances of indifference and rejection, there is an insatiable hunger and thirst for the transcendent in every human being, even if they do not openly acknowledge it.

In times like the one we are living now, when people realize how uncertain any material assurance can be, people may be more willing to turn to the true source of life. But we must present the message of hope to them in a language they can understand. We need to be familiar with the current trends in modern thinking. Not to yield to them and dilute the Good News of salvation in something that may sound "acceptable" to current thinking. But to use it, as Paul did, to make a good argument in favor of the authentic life-giving message of love in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Fr. Carlos E. Expósito, Rector

Readings for this Sunday – The Sixth Sunday of Easter

Acts 17:22-31 Psalm 148:7-14 1 Peter 3:8-18 John 15:1-8

## CALENDAR

**SUNDAY: The Sixth Sunday of Easter**

All Saints' Sunday 9am Service

Join Zoom Meeting from our web site at [www.allsaintschurch.org](http://www.allsaintschurch.org)

7:00pm Little Apple Group (Parish Hall)

**TUESDAY Noon Service**

Join Zoom Meeting from our web site at [www.allsaintschurch.org](http://www.allsaintschurch.org)

**FRIDAY**     **Christian Formation Study at noon**  
Join Zoom Meeting from our web site at [www.allsaintschurch.org](http://www.allsaintschurch.org)

**AA Meetings**

8:00p Ladies' Group (Fireside Room)

8:15p Men's Group (Parish Hall)

**SUNDAY**     **The Seventh Sunday of Easter**

All Saints' Sunday 9am Service

Join Zoom Meeting from our web site at [www.allsaintschurch.org](http://www.allsaintschurch.org)

**AA Meeting**

7:00p Little Apple Group (Parish Hall)