

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

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Today's gospel passage takes us back to the Last Supper, to Jesus' final conversation with the disciples.

- Naturally, He's doing everything He can to prepare them for what they're about to experience in seeing His passion and death – but how?
- Doesn't give them a more detailed prophecy of death and resurrection.
- Doesn't unlock the scriptures with a more in-depth study of the scriptures.

Jesus emphasizes His relationship with them, because more than anything else, *that's* what will comfort them.

Struck by this because I've *experienced* it myself.

- Whenever I've found myself struggling with something – whether in the Bible, the news, or my own life – it's putting it in the context of a loving relationship that always helps.
- Sometimes it connects the dots for me and I get some new insight, but even when I don't, I'm comforted by simply recalling God's love for me.
- [Seems to be true for everyone – sometimes new insight can be helpful in a pastoral situation, but sharing God's love never fails.]

Last week: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me,"

- Jesus tells them that He's going to prepare a place for them, and that He Himself is the Way, the Truth, and the Life
- He will clear their path to God the Father and give them everything they need to follow Him.

But Jesus doesn't stop there – He has more for us, which is where today's gospel lesson picks up.

- Jesus tells us that He is the vine and that we are the branches to assure us that we won't be left alone.
- When Jesus says, "Abide in me, and I in you," He's telling us that He will live His own divine life in us.
- So no matter what we encounter or obstacle we confront, we can know that God has already given us everything we need to love him in that moment and reveal that love to the world.

This is what it means to live by faith, and it's what allows us to bear the fruit that points to Jesus living in us.

- When we're not in bondage to the present moment, we have time to be patient and compassionate.
- When we can see beyond our immediate circumstances, it's easier to love our neighbor with mercy and gentleness.
- When we're not limited to what we can figure out for ourselves, it transforms our suffering and gives courage to those around us in theirs.

It's a beautiful way to live life, but on a practical level, how is it that we can come to this kind of confidence in God? How can we find this kind of peace and confidence in God in the midst of our challenges?

First of all, need to be aware that as we grow in the spiritual life one way that the enemy attacks us is constantly trying to make us make decisions, especially big life decisions, out of fear.

- All kinds of forms: fear of failure, losing something we hold dear, our identity, our sense of who we are

Therefore, **first** practical thing we can do is be resolve not to make decisions out of fear

- When we follow the Lord, He has a plan and we can be confident in that plan,
- Not living by anxiety, but by faith in Christ Jesus who died for me.
- Critical because you then open yourself up to other ways in which Jesus might speak to you.

Brings us to the **second** practical thing to do: make space in your life for the Body of Christ and the Church.

- The Church: worship, and the sacraments
 - o Other 3 gospels emphasize Jesus instituting the Eucharist at the Last Supper
 - o Need to worship, use the sacraments
- Where we meet other members: need to have good/holy conversations with people that have made that same resolution that we've made.
 - o Not all are edifying because we're imperfect, but we still need time for those

Finally, make time each day for a conversation with the Lord in prayer.

- Sit with the Lord and let Him communicate to your heart the confidence you need to follow him
- Sometimes Jesus wants to give us the things we need, but we're so busy that we just don't give Him the chance to give them, or ourselves the chance to see what He's given
- 1. Resolve to live not by fear, but by faith in Jesus who died for you,
 2. And whenever that's a struggle, run to Him
 3. Promised to be with us in prayer, the Church with Her members and sacraments.

Jesus points us to relationship because this freedom and peace isn't just a beautiful way to live our lives – it's *the* life that we were created to live.