

5th Sunday of Easter

John 14:1-14.

HYMNS: 645, 564, 726, 722, 618, 922.

INTROIT: Psalm 146

P Praise the LORD!

C **Praise the LORD, O my soul!**

P Let me praise the LORD throughout my life!

C **Let me sing praise to my God as long as I live!**

P Do not trust in noble people,

C **in a descendant of Adam, who cannot save!**

P When his spirit departs, he will return to his earth.

C **On that day his plans will perish.**

P Blessed is the one who has the God of Jacob for his help!

C **His hope is in the LORD, his God,**

P who has made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them,

C **who remains faithful for ever,**

P who provides justice for those who are oppressed, and who gives food to those who are hungry.

C **The LORD sets prisoners free.**

P The LORD opens the eyes of blind people.

C **The LORD raises up those who are bowed down.**

P The LORD loves righteous people.

C **The LORD watches over resident-foreigners.**

P He helps up the orphan and the widow.

C **However, He makes the way of wicked people crooked.**

All **The LORD will reign for ever, Your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the LORD!**

COLLECT: O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

1st reading: Acts 6:1-9, 7:2a, 51-60.

Epistle: 1 Peter 2: 2-10.

Gospel: John 14: 1-14.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **Amen.**

The text for our sermon for this morning is written in the book of John 14:1-14 which was our Gospel reading before.

1 “Let not your hearts be troubled! Believe in God and believe in Me! **2** In My Father’s house there are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you, because I am going to prepare a place for you. **3** If I go to prepare a place for you, I shall also come again and take you to be with Me, so that you also may be where I am. **4** You know the way to where I am going.”

5 Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?”

6 Jesus told him, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. **7** If you have known Me, you will know My Father also; and from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”

8 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father! Then that is enough for us.”

9 Jesus asked him, “Have I been with you for such a long time, and have you not known Me, Philip? The person who has seen Me has seen the Father. How do you say, ‘Show us the Father’? **10** Do you not believe that I am in the Father and that the Father is in Me? These Words, which I am telling you, I am not speaking on My own authority; but the Father, who remains in Me, is doing His works. **11** Believe Me, that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me. Or else, believe because of the works themselves!

12 “Truly, truly, I tell you, the person who believes in Me will also do the works that I am doing; and he will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. **13** I shall also do whatever you ask in My name, in order that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **14** If you ask Me for anything in My name, I shall do it.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. **Amen.**

Dear friends in Christ,
Peace be with you.

In the first three Sundays of the Easter season, we had this recurring theme that the disciples did not know Jesus until He showed Himself to them. There was Mary who thought Jesus was a gardener until He called her by name. There was Thomas who refused to believe in Jesus until he saw the marks of the crucifixion. There were the two disciples on the road to Emmaus who did not recognize Jesus until He revealed Himself in the breaking of the bread.

During those sermons, I often remarked that Jesus often told His disciples what he was about to do and they didn't get it. Jesus told them He would be tortured and crucified and they didn't have a clue. He promised to rise from the dead and when He did, they didn't believe it. They never really got it until after Jesus actually did the dying and the rising. They never really got it until Jesus showed Himself to them in some way.

You can imagine that if they didn't get the crucifixion or the resurrection that when Jesus began to tell them about the Ascension and Eternal Life, they would be totally lost. Today's Gospel tells us that this is pretty much right. Today's Gospel takes us back before the crucifixion and the disciples are having a really hard time keeping up with Jesus as He tells them that He is preparing a place for them in eternity.

These situations really support the credibility of the Bible. If you were making up a religion, you wouldn't make yourself look so dumb would you. For example when Jesus died on the cross you would tell how all His disciples gently took the body down from the cross and laid it in a special tomb. Then all the disciples would have gathered together for a vigil as they waited for Jesus to keep the promise to rise from the dead. You would want everyone to know how loyal you were, if you were making it all up that is. In reality, the disciples ran for the hills, or hid in locked rooms. They definitely weren't brave or heroic. The actual history of the events doesn't show the disciples in a good light. It's definitely not the way you would tell the story if you were making it up. You would put an heroic spin on things so to speak.

Now the account in today's Gospel comes from the last teachings of Jesus before His arrest. He and the disciples were in the upper room. Jesus knew that soldiers would arrest Him in a few hours and that He would go to the cross the next day. As Jesus taught His disciples, He looked through the cross, past the resurrection, and out into eternity. He said, **² In My Father's house there are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you, because I am going to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go to prepare a place for you, I shall also come again and take you to be with Me, so that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to where I am going.**"

Of course this all sounded very good to the disciples until Jesus said, **"You know the way to where I am going."** Thomas spoke for the disciples and said, **"Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"** Thomas also speaks for us as well.

We too would like to know the way - the way out of this sinful world of decay and death. We would like to know the way to a world without injuries and medical conditions. We would like to know the way to a world without war and murder. We would like to know the way to a place where we will never wear out and die. We all seek a place of eternal peace - peace with God and peace with man. We all seek a place without sin, sorrow, or death. That place is the Father's house. Therefore, we join with Thomas and ask Jesus about the way to that house.

Jesus said to him, **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."** That way isn't the way we would expect. That way isn't a map with a set of directions. Instead, it's a person - Jesus Himself. How can we travel this route. We can't do it unless Jesus leads us by the hand. It's Jesus that must take us. In fact, that is exactly what He promised in the earlier verse when He promised, **"I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."**

This way is totally different from all the false religions in the world. In some way, every other religion teaches that we must work our own way into God's graces. Some of the false religions even refer to a path, but it is a path that we must walk in our own abilities. The false religions of the world set us up for Satan's sting.

Satan is more than happy to feed our ego and tell us that we can earn our way into heaven, and the world is more than happy to help Satan out. The world sends us all kinds of messages that puff up our self-esteem that tell us that the good works we need for heaven might be a bit of a challenge, but we can do it. We're all basically good people. Most of us are nice guys right?. Heaven is within our grasp. We just have to put in a little more effort and it will be ours. This is Satan's way of sucking us in to be stung.

Many people succumb to Satan's misleading lies of ego and self-righteousness. They live a full and fulfilling life. They come to believe that everything is in order. All seems right with the world. Then they die and discover that they had been on the broad road that leads to destruction all along.

There are some people, though, who are more perceptive. They begin to see through the lies. They are realistic enough to see that they are not going to pull it off. They do a reality check and realize that Satan and the world lied to them and that they can never earn their way to heaven. It's then that Satan triggers the sting.

The sting comes when Satan takes on his true identity as the accuser. He starts to load on the guilt. Suddenly, all the bad and evil things we have done in our lives come to our memory. We cringe as we see the foolishness of our youth. We re-coil at all the evil images that leap to our minds as memory after memory show us how truly evil we are. The forces who once lied to us to convince us that we could make it

into heaven now whiplash us into another lie. They work very hard to convince us that our sin is more powerful than Jesus' forgiveness - that Jesus can no longer forgive us. This is the sin of despair. The one who reminds us the most of this type of despair is Judas who went and hanged himself.

This sting, this rip off of Satan's is the reason we can take great comfort in the fact that Jesus Christ is the one and only way. Jesus is the only one who endured the worst temptations of the devil and the world and remained without sin. As the only perfect human, Jesus is the only one who could satisfy God's Justice. He is the only one who could endure the wrath of God against sin. His holy nature makes Him the only one whom death could not hold.

Jesus is the only one who could do all this because He is the only one who is God from eternity begotten of the Father and also man born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus left His Father's house and came to this earth to do the works of His Father. In His human nature He lived a righteous life under the authority of the law. He lived the righteous life that we could not live and He lived that righteous life for us. In His obedience to the Father's plan, He allowed the authorities to arrest Him, torture Him, and put Him on a cross. By doing these things He satisfied His Father's wrath against our sin. This is how He became the way for us to enter His Father's house, and, we have confidence that He is the way because He rose from the dead. This is the reason He could say, **If I go to prepare a place for you, I shall also come again and take you to be with Me, so that you also may be where I am.** His resurrection assures us that we too shall rise from death and that He will take us to live with Him.

Notice that Jesus said, **I shall ... take you and "I am the way."** He didn't say, "read the map or I will be the way." **He is the way** for us now. That means that we don't have to wait for the day when all the rooms in the Father's House will be ready - the day when all shall rise. Jesus already brings heaven to us. Jesus has promised, **"For where two or three have come together in My name, there I am among them."** [Matthew 18:20.] He also said, Certainly, **"I am with you always, until the end of the age."** [Matthew 28:20.] His promises tell us that He is with us even though we cannot see Him and that means that eternal life with Jesus has already begun for those who believe in Him.

What gracious words Jesus shared with His disciples in that upper room on the evening before He went to the cross. His words are full of comfort and reassurance. How gracious it is of Christ to prepare a uniquely perfect room for each and every one of us in His Father's house. How comforting it is to know that Jesus will bring us to His Father's house safely because He Himself is the way. How reassuring it is to know that Jesus is the full presence of God with us even now. How marvellous it is to know that although we cannot see Him, Jesus is here with us now and He brings heaven and all its blessings with Him. Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

3rd Hymn: 726,

Prayer of the Church Fifth Sunday of Easter

P Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.
Brief Silence.

P For the holy Christian Church in this place and throughout the world, that our good and gracious Lord would be pleased to grant His faithful people a growing and perpetual joy in the victory He has won for us through the death and resurrection of His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ; Lord, in Your mercy,

C **Hear our prayer.**

P For all children and young people, that our gracious heavenly Father would refresh them with His Word and Spirit, that they may grow up in the salvation He has won for them through His suffering, death, and resurrection; that He would protect them from the evil one and keep them in their baptismal grace; and

that He would lead them into lives of faithfulness and service that offer Him the fruit of thanksgiving and praise; Lord, in Your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P For those in authority over us especially our prime minister, federal, state, and local governments. Those in the police, doctors, nurses, fire and ambulance and state emergency services, and our military personal serving to aid all Your people. Instil upon them the conviction that they are Your servants to guide, protect, defend, and to promote peace and good order in our land. Lead them to act honestly and justly for the welfare of all. Lord, in Your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P For all our Pastors as well as their families. As You have said “The harvest is great, but the labourers are few. Therefore we earnestly pray to You the Lord of the harvest to provide us with labourers - Bless Your Church and all the congregations of the A.E.L.C. here in Australia and the ULMA in America, Continue to strengthen our congregations in the bonds of Christian love so that we may rejoice with all those who rejoice. - Strengthen those that are in nursing homes, hospitals and care facilities that You would give them with unity of heart, mind and witness, that nothing may hinder the work You have called us to do. Lord, in Your mercy.

C Hear our prayer

P For the unemployed and the underemployed, that our gracious Lord would encourage them in their search for suitable work and grant their search success, that they may have their anxieties concerning work and life lifted and their service to their neighbour through their vocation swiftly restored;

Lord, in Your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P For those who are sick, undergoing surgery, or suffering any other affliction, [*especially,*
], that our Great and heavenly Physician would grant them healing, according to His good and gracious will; that He would strengthen and keep them steadfast in true faith as they bear their crosses until He gives them deliverance and health; and that He would give wisdom and guidance to those who care for them. Lord, in Your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P As we come to receive this Holy Sacrament of the Altar, we pray that with repentance and a living faith we may receive our Lord’s body and blood. In response, lead us to return to You what is already Yours, our very selves, with the tithes and gifts we bring, as part of our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer

P Into Your hands, O Lord, we entrust all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Your Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

4th Hymn: 722,