

5th Sunday of Easter, Year “A”

“Do not let your hearts be troubled... Trust in God”

A story entitled “The Four Seasons of Life” is about a man who had four sons. Before his death, he wanted his sons to learn a very important lesson in life – to not judge things too quickly. So he sent them each on a quest, in turn, to go and look at a pear tree that was a great distance away.

The first son went in the winter, the second in the spring, the third in summer, and the youngest son in the fall.

When they had all gone and come back, he called them together to describe what they had seen.

The first son who went in winter said that the tree was ugly, bent, and twisted.

The second son who went in spring said no – the tree was covered with green buds and full of promise.

The third son who went in summertime disagreed; he said it was laden with blossoms that smelled so sweet and looked so beautiful, it was the most graceful thing he had ever seen.

The last son who went in the fall season disagreed with all of them; he said the tree was ripe and drooping with fruit, full of life and fulfillment.

The man then explained to his sons that they were all right because they had each seen but one season in the life of the tree.

He told them that you cannot judge a tree or a person by only one season, and that the essence of who they are – and the pleasure, joy, and love that come from that life – can only be measured at the end, when all the seasons are up.

If you give up when it's winter, you will miss the promise of your spring, the beauty of your summer, fulfillment of your fall season.

Don't judge a life by one difficult season. Don't let the pain of one season destroy the joy of all the rest. ~ *Unknown author*

We are still in the Easter season even though it doesn't look joyful as such. One of the best proofs of the resurrection of Jesus is neither the empty tomb nor the witness of the women, but the transformation seen in the lives of the apostles who believed. Peter, who once denied Jesus three times for fear of the Jews, now after the resurrection, becomes courageous enough to heal in Jesus' name and stand before the Jews, preaching to them, confronting them with the naked truth of killing Jesus and at the same time inviting them to repent and believe the Good News of salvation.

The shameful death of Jesus on the cross was about to eclipse everything about Jesus. Even those who crucified Jesus thought that it would bring an end to Jesus' fame and teaching. But, to their greatest surprise, Jesus became even more popular in death.

The apostles, too, were in danger of limiting their knowledge of Jesus to the Golgotha event. By reappearing to them, Jesus wanted them to embrace not one season but the entire seasons of His life, which includes the message of the prophets, Jesus' birth, preaching, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

Coming to this understanding necessitates that the apostles overcome their fears; hence, Jesus says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in Me." Fear impedes growth, and oftentimes, our lives are fraught with fear and worry. We worry about life, death, failure, disappointment, etc. It may not always be irrational to be concerned about life, death, failure, or disappointment. Fear and worry does not help. Faith in God helps; hence, the risen Jesus assures us that He is the beacon of hope for all who wish to move on.

Armed with this truth, even the apostle Thomas, who once doubted the resurrection of Jesus and is now convinced, becomes the protagonist of a deep and profound faith in the risen and glorified Jesus – “Master, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?”

Jesus said to Thomas, “I AM the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you know Me, then you will also know My Father.”

The radical transformation we see in Peter and Thomas is, in essence, what the Easter celebration is all about. The resurrection of Jesus renews the face of the earth. Human beings become one with God. Eternal life is no longer a mere idea: Eternal life is now.

The resurrection of Jesus becomes a foundational experience for all who wish to make a difference in the world. Faith in God makes for a good beginning, but it is not enough. What we do with our faith in God is what distinguishes a believer from a nonbeliever, for faith without good works is dead.

We are not called Christians because of the church where we worship or the denomination to whose traditions we adhere. Those who want to be like Christ are called Christians. We are Christians whenever we contribute to the civilization of love in the world – “Heal the world. Make it a better place. For you and for me....”

In this world, both believers and nonbelievers are vulnerable to the corona-virus pandemic. All shop at the same mall, pay their taxes, drive their cars on the same roads, obey the same traffic laws, yet there is more to life than merely living in the world.

The essence of life is found in the embrace of the beauty, love, truth, justice, and goodness that surround us. When Jesus says, “I am the way,” Jesus knows certainly well that there are many ways in the world. Just as not all roads lead to your house, so not all ways lead to

the appropriation of the essence of life, which is happiness (eternal life for believers).

Some seek for the essence of life (happiness) through yoga, meditation, horoscopes, new age philosophy, etc. Even when yoga helps to restore temporal calm, it does not promise the true happiness which our hearts long for. Only God can give that. Believers are informed today that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We need to have a personal relationship with Jesus in order to be liberated from the hold the world has on us.

Jesus has come that we may have life and have it in abundance. By virtue of our baptism, we already share in the life of Jesus. We are called to become co-creators with God in giving life to all whose hearts are overburdened by the worries of life. Serving God in others becomes a practical way we bring life to others and empower them to follow Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life.