

6th SUNDAY OF EASTER Year A, April 27/08

Are we aware of what the Spirit is saying to us through our Popes?

Jesus said to Peter and the apostles: “He who hears you, hears me.”

The Popes are the successors of Peter whom Jesus has placed in charge of the Church.

They continue to govern and lead the Church and Jesus continues to speak through them.

Jesus guides them through the Spirit, the Spirit of Truth.

1) The Holy Spirit Guides Us and Strengthens Us to Deal with the Problems of Our Time

1. The Spirit of Truth, speaking through the Holy Father to the whole Church, gives us guidance in dealing with the injustices and evil in our economic, political, cultural and social systems.

2. But before we speak specifically of what we can do in these areas, we need to be aware of how the Spirit will strengthen us and give us courage to act for social justice, and for the upholding of human dignity, and the social love that should unite people. We may be afraid to speak out for justice, reforms and human decency, for truth and goodness. The Holy Spirit will be our advocate to support us.

3. Through his Death and Resurrection Jesus has brought us the Holy Spirit so we can live in God and have God living in us: “you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” With Jesus in us, we can face all threats and opposition. Jesus says: “I have overcome the world”, the world of deceit and trickery and abuse.

2) The Spirit Makes Us Able to Love with the Love of Jesus

1. “No legislation, no system of rules or negotiation will ever succeed in persuading men and peoples to live in unity, brotherhood and peace; no line of reasoning will ever be able to surpass the appeal of love. Love is a force capable of inspiring new ways of approaching the problems of today’s world, of profoundly renewing structures, social organizations, legal systems from within. It is an indispensable act of love to strive to organize and structure society so that one’s neighbour will not find himself in poverty.” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church 207,208)

2. Love conquers all things (1Cor. 13:1-13). The Holy Spirit gives us the power to love with the love of Jesus, since Jesus is living in us through the Spirit. The Spirit will bring us confidence, hope and courage. As we experience the power of the Spirit, we will know the Spirit, and know that he is in us.

3) Jesus Wants Us to Love Everyone With His Love

1. Jesus says to us today: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

2. The commandments that Jesus is talking about are not just the Ten Commandments. Jesus is calling us to believe in him and to trust in him, and most of all, to keep his new commandment: “Love one another as I have loved you”

3. The way we give witness to the presence of Jesus within us is by our love for one another. Jesus said: “By this will all men know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” This is a love that is open to everyone, reaching out to all, the love of Jesus that we want to share with everyone, especially the poor and needy.

4. This is the way parishes are called to be and to act. Think about how you as a parish “love one another” and express this.

4) Salvation Through Our Work In This World

1. In his latest pastoral letter to the Church, “Our Hope of Salvation”, Pope Benedict says that “modern Christianity has to a large extent restricted its attention to the individual and his salvation. But our relationship with God is established through our communion with Jesus, and this relationship is with the one who gave himself as a ransom for all. Being in communion with Jesus

draws us into his “being for all.” Jesus commits us to live for others. The love of God is revealed in our responsibility for others.”

2. So we don’t save our souls by withdrawing from this world. We save our souls by engaging with our fellow members of the Church and society to make this world a better place and by helping the poor and needy to have a better life, as the Saints have so gloriously shown us.

3. The reconstruction of the social order in our world now, as the Popes have so long been calling for, is not some temporal thing that doesn’t matter. It has a critical part to play if people are to find the presence of God in our present world structure and billions of people lifted out of poverty and oppression.

4. Therefore, again as the Popes have exhorted, Catholics are called to play their part in economic and political life, to establish a social order governed by social justice and social love.

5. Many Catholics, both clergy and lay, have not been listening to the Popes, have not been heeding their message in their pastoral letters or encyclicals. We need to study the Social Doctrine of the Church and act upon it. A first step is to form a social justice study/action group in our parishes. A great deal of material on the Social Doctrine of the Church is available on the Internet. Look up Catholic Social Teaching on the search engine of your computer.

5) Practicing the Virtues of Social Justice and Social Love.

1. The way that the reconstruction of the social order will come about is by the practice of the virtues of social justice and social love.

2. The virtue of social justice means that we all are obliged to work with others to make the institutions, systems and practices of social and economic life conform to the common good, which is the good of each and everyone of us.

3. The virtue of social love, or social charity, means that we are all obliged to work with others for mutual respect, harmony and unity in all our social relationships, in all our groups.

4. The practice of these virtues requires working with others to bring about change, to work in and for solidarity. It requires group action, organizing with others, perhaps only a few to begin with. “Most of the problems afflicting the various peoples of our continent have their origin in socioeconomic causes, which can be overcome if each person or group – including nations – applies the principle of solidarity” (Special Synod for America).

We can see the power of solidarity in the way that labour unions and cooperatives have bettered the condition of workers.

5. The practice of these virtues begins in our families. Members of the family must work together to make things good for all in the family, to make mutual respect and mutual care reign in the family, so that all members are united in mutual love.

6. As they experience this in their families, our young people will be formed to work with others for the common good of each and every member of society, for what each one deserves in justice and social love.

What is it like in your family?

7. Our faith, truly understood, calls us to responsibility for others.

8. Jesus sums it all up in the Last Judgment scene he gives us in Matthew’s Gospel:

“I was hungry and you gave me to eat ... enter into the home of your Father.”

6) Our Mass

1. In the Mass, the human elements of bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

2. Jesus wants to transform us by bringing us into himself, to be his body on earth now, united as one in him, working with others to make his presence and his love felt in our families, our parish, our workplaces, in our society.

3. Let us offer ourselves with Jesus as he becomes present in our Eucharistic Prayer and receive his saving power for social justice and social love.

