
Fourth Sunday of Easter, 2008

“With meekness receive the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”
(James 1:21)

The last Sundays after Easter continue to sing Christ's glory and the joy of redemption. As the Ascension and Pentecost draw near, the gospels remind us how Jesus prepared the disciples for His departure by telling them of the coming of



the Holy Spirit, who would be their light, their strength and their support. The Holy Spirit is the perfect gift that St James speaks of in his Epistle. To the Holy Spirit is entrusted the guidance of the Church, whose leader and inspiration He is, just as He is also the very source of Christian life for each of the faithful. He was sent by Christ, the Word of God, and carries on Christ's work and bears witness to Him; at the same time He convicts the world of error and sin in its refusal to accept the Saviour, the ingrafted Word. The Holy Spirit is then already at work; at His work of judgement, enlightening the good who hearken to the truth, convicting the sinful world which sets obstacles in the way of grace. We, then, “with meekness receive the ingrafted word.”

In the *Shepherd Discourse* of St John's Gospel, Christ himself tells us: “I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly.” Jesus tells us that He will show the sheep where to find “pasture” – something they can live on – and that He will truly lead them to the springs of life¹. There is an even more immediate echo of the shepherd discourse from Ezekiel²: “I will feed them with good pasture, and upon the mountain country of Israel shall be their pasture.” The Fathers saw Ezekiel's reference to the mountain country of Israel and the shady well-watered pastures on its uplands as an image of the heights of Holy Scripture, of the life giving food of God's word. The Fathers certainly understood Jesus himself correctly. Man lives on truth and on being loved: on being loved by the truth. He needs God, the God who draws close to him, interprets for him the meaning of life, and thus points him towards the path of life. Of course man needs bread, he needs food for the body; but ultimately what he needs most is the Word, Love, God himself. Whoever gives him that gives him “life in abundance”, and also releases the energies man needs to shape the earth intelligently, and to find for himself and for others the goods that we can have only in common with others. In the gospel of John, the point the discourse is making is that

¹ Ps. 23

² Ezekiel 34.14

Jesus, being the incarnate Word of God himself, is not just the Shepherd, but also the food the true “pasture”. He gives life by giving himself, for He is life. “I am the way, the Truth and the Life.” And does He not make that clear in the 6th chapter of St John verse 51 etc. — “I am the living bread which came down from heaven ... If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world.”

You can surely see where this is leading us; to the “Lamb of God”, the victim of the Sacrifice and the gift of Holy Communion with that same “Lamb” as the food of our souls.

Our Holy Father now carries a Cross with a centre-piece depicting the Eucharistic Lamb of the Apocalypse. Throughout his apostolic journey in America, he is emphasising the necessity of “Unity in Truth”. The need to seek that holiness which Christ himself required of us — “Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” A holiness that is founded on unity in faith, hope, and charity through which the Church on earth will be purified in justice and peace. This goal is possible to every one of us, and is just as necessary here; and we will find it in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass through the Lamb of God.

There is much more to say on this matter which must wait for another time. Meanwhile, let us turn to Mary Immaculate, Queen of Heaven, and humbly beg her help; ask her for that enlightenment through which we will advance in the knowledge of her divine Son through the Incarnation, Cross and Resurrection.