

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 10, 2020

Last Sunday's scriptures focused on Christ the Good Shepherd, who leads His flock safely to God. Today's scriptures focus on Christ's flock, or to use another word, His Church. Our first reading tells us that service to people and God are essential to the mission of the Church as given to us by Christ. Service to people comes in many forms. It can mean food, financial help, and opportunities to improve people's lives through jobs and education. It can also mean emotional support to individuals and families in need. Service to God gives time and attention to God in the additional forms of personal daily prayer, reading scripture, and worship.

In today's second reading, St. Peter says: "let yourselves be built into a spiritual house." We may hear Peter's words with new interest these days since we cannot gather in the physical brick and mortar houses of worship we love so well. Yet even in this pandemic, God is building us into His spiritual house, if we let Him. Right now, there are many conversations about how the pandemic has ruined our plans. Plans for baptism, for first communion, and confirmation, plans for a wedding or a funeral, graduation, a birthday, or anniversary have all been canceled or adjusted in some painful way. These important milestones will all happen, but at a time and in a way, we cannot predict just now. Hopefully, our disappointment over our frustrated plans will not blind us to the unfolding of God's grace and God's plan to bless us even in these challenging times. When we finally can gather and celebrate, I think it will be with fewer feelings of entitlement and a bit more humility and appreciation for God's grace, God's goodness, and God's providential care for us. Perhaps our understandable preoccupation with reopening our church buildings safely could extend to opening our hearts to patience, and compassion to the people we live with, and to the people we stand in line with six feet apart to buy food and supplies. Patience and compassion are also expressions of being part of Christ's flock, Christ's Church.

In today's Gospel, St. John reminds us that if we want to know what God is like, we look to Christ. To see Him is to see God. Christ's flock, His Church, is meant to do the same by becoming an icon of God's compassion. May our words, deeds, and choices this week point to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who dwells in our hearts.

Fr. Valentine

Scripture Readings: <http://usccb.org/bible/readings/051020.cfm>