

May 6, 2018 5th Sunday of Easter

A couple that had been married fifty years were sitting there, watching tv in the living room. The husband, all of a sudden, looked at his wife and he felt this tremendous love grow in his heart for her. He looked at her and said, "I've found you tried and true." The wife who was hard of hearing says, "What?" He said, "I found you tried and true." She looked at him and she said, "I'm tired of you too!"

We have been reading from the Acts of the Apostles and we also have the letters of St. Paul that we've been reading from. It's about St. Peter and St. Paul. We call them the two pillars of the Church. But it's real interesting here, what's going on, with both of these guys. They both lived at the same time. They both died almost the same time. But, both of them were doing different things. St. Paul's letters were written first. The Acts of the Apostles were written about the same time. The letters of Peter in the New Testament are a little bit newer. We see something that's going on. St. Paul makes three journeys out from Jerusalem, back around and coming in again. There is evidence in history for a fourth one, to Spain, but we haven't enough information yet to definitely say, he went to Spain. Although there's tremendous visions attributed, while he was there. There is a major shrine for him there too. He would go out and he would evangelize these town, these cities. He would start a church there, then put somebody in charge and then move on. His letters, when we read them are exhortations to these various churches, as we call them. He is telling them to "shape up" because you know of course, people get together and things happen. Prejudices and other things start happening. Paul was doing this and all of a sudden, one night, he had a vision from the Holy Spirit. Now, was this one night different from any other time? No. St. Paul had a vision from the Holy Spirit when Jesus came and slapped him down and said, "Why are you persecuting me?" St. Paul has had visions and dreams from the Holy Spirit, and he's had to learn slowly over time, to follow them. So it was after the third journey that all of a sudden, he had a vision that night. He was going to keep going, his whole ministry was the Middle East and the Near East; Turkey and that region. But this one night he had a vision and there was a man from Macedonia. Well, Paul has been in Asia the whole time. All of a sudden, because the Holy Spirit come in a dream, this man from Macedonia says to Paul, "Come over here." That means Paul has to cross over the border into Europe. Does he listen? Yes. Because he listened, 2000 years of western civilization took place. Because he listened, you and I are here today; because he listened to the Holy Spirit. Paul had to learn, he had to slowly grow in his understanding, his ability to be able to receive messages and understand them. He didn't start out, immediately knowing what to do. In fact, the first time he got slapped down with the Holy Spirit and Jesus, he spent at least at least five to ten years being trained and out in the desert praying to understand more about the Holy Spirit.

Now at the time that Paul is doing this, Peter has to come along and he has to start organizing things. Because when you get a certain amount of people together, you have to have organization. Somebody has to be in charge, there has to be rules. So, Peter was doing this. But Peter had a quandary when he first started out. Peter was one of these that believed that you had to become a Jew before you became a Christian. Because they looked at themselves as just a different kind of Jew, a reformed Jew or a sect within Judaism. He had this quandary because what did Jesus say? Jesus said, "There will be others coming from the east and the west", talking about others than Jews. So what happens is, Peter is still acting like a Jew; he won't go into a gentile's house, he's still eating kosher. So God gives him a vision through the Holy Spirit. In this vision, this cloth come out of heaven and it's got all these creatures that he wasn't allowed to eat as a practicing Jew. God says, "Take and eat." There was bacon, there was pork chops, there was lobsters, crabs; all the stuff we really love and pay for today. You can't do that if you're

an orthodox Jew. So Peter tells God, "No, heaven forbid God, I have never let those things touch my lips and I never will." We all hear, how many times does God have to tell him before he gets it through his head? Three. He has to have the same vision three times. So the cloth comes out the third time, and God says, "Take and eat." And Peter says, "Oh, okay." Then Peter realized something. God is a good cook! All of a sudden Peter realized what he had been missing. Bacon, pork chops, crabs and lobsters and all of that. And all of a sudden, a light went off in his head. From this vision he had another vision. "Peter, go to Cornelius' house." Now Cornelius was a centurion, he was the worst kind of gentile. He was a Roman soldier. Understand that in the early Church, for three or four hundred years: teachers, lawyers and soldiers were not allowed to become Christian. They're not allowed to become Catholic. Teachers taught how to avoid the truth and twist it, lawyers practiced twisting the truth, and soldiers kill people. So, they said no, you can't come into the Church. But then gradually what happened? The Holy Spirit moved and all of a sudden people went, "Wait a minute, Jesus said 'I came for everyone, baptize the whole world,' not just everyone besides teachers, lawyers and soldiers." So they understood that. Peter has this vision, "Go to Cornelius' house." He doesn't know who Cornelius is. All of a sudden, at the same time Peter has his vision, Cornelius is having a vision, and it says, "Go to Peter." And they get half of the directions, it's like that country western song, "Meet me in the Middle" and they meet. Cornelius is so impressed with Peter, he bows to him and Peter says, "Stop, stop, I'm a human being too, I'm not God." Peter goes to Cornelius' house, something he would never have done, but now realizes it's okay because he's eaten bacon and pork chops and lobsters and crabs. So he goes into Cornelius' house and there's all these people: Cornelius' family, his servants, all these people. And all of a sudden, while Peter's there with them, the Holy Spirit comes down and zaps everybody; preaching in tongues, prophesying, etc. Now Peter realizes, duh! The Holy Spirit came for them too, that must mean it's okay to baptize them. So we see Peter's conundrum, his problem is taken away, because he learned to listen to the Holy Spirit. We see that he's still kind of dense, he has to be kicked in the head three times. But he listened to the Holy Spirit.

Because he listened to the Holy Spirit and because Paul listened to the Holy Spirit, the Church blossomed and thrived. Sociologists and historians tell us; there has never been an institution in the history of mankind, that grew as fast as the Catholic, Christian Church did in the first 300 to 400 years. Never, but it's because they listened to the Holy Spirit. And because they listened to the Holy Spirit, what is the spirit of? It's the spirit of love. We see that in the gospel, we see that in the second reading, "Love one another." We can only do that if we're open to the Holy Spirit. If we ask the Holy Spirit to come into our lives, because our prejudices get in the way. "No, no, I don't want to deal with that person, you know if it was up to me, these people would not be allowed in church." We have these kinds of things. But if we pray to the Holy Spirit and say, "Come Holy Spirit, enlighten me, help me love these people the way that Jesus loves them, the agape love where we want them in heaven with God and with us. You don't have to like them. We have to respect them and try to get them to heaven because Jesus did the same thing and we are followers of Jesus. We have to open ourselves to the Holy Spirit, because without the Holy Spirit, we are missing, we are limited. That's why God sent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not asked enough. We pray to Jesus, we pray to God the Father, we pray to the Blessed Mother, to our favorite saint, whoever. We don't always pray to the Holy Spirit and that's a shame, because we live in the age of the Holy Spirit. The moment Pentecost happened, boom, we're in the age of this Holy Spirit. Jesus said, I will send you another person of the trinity. Not in those words, but he said I will send someone for you. That person is the Holy Spirit. If we're not talking to Him, if we're not praying to Him, if we're not asking Him to make us better Christians, better Catholics, better

people, then we're missing out. Only through the Holy Spirit did Paul become who God wanted him to be and do what he needed to do. Only through the Holy Spirit did Peter become who he was supposed to be and what he was supposed to do. It's the same for us. For us to truly become who we are supposed to be in God's eyes and to do what God wants us to do for the Church and for the kingdom of heaven here on earth, then we have to pray to the Holy Spirit. We need to make more use of the third person of the Holy Trinity. Because it is the spirit of love, the love between the Father and Son became real and became the Holy Spirit. So it's truly the spirit of love, nothing else. Just love. If we abide and we get that spirit in us, we're feeling love for each other, then we're going to do incredible things.

God bless you.