

Brothers and sisters, in today's Gospel, the Church gives us a setting that prepares us for another departure, namely: The Ascension of Jesus Christ, the event which we will remember in the Thursday's liturgies. Jesus gives the apostles words of encouragement saying: "Do not let your hearts be troubled" (Jn. 14:27), and promised them the coming of the Paraclete (Advocate, Helper, Jn.14:26). Jesus promises the disciples God's presence will be given to them in a new way. The Holy Spirit will be with **them to comfort them, to empower them, and to inspire them**. They will, however, have to see God and experience God in a new way: a spiritual way. God's presence will no longer be tangible and visible to them or immediately available to them as a close friend embodied in a human body. Jesus they had known was about to become Someone new and different, and in today's first reading, we see how the Spirit directed the Apostles to solve the controversy between the Jews and the Gentiles.

Today's Gospel forms part of Jesus' farewell discourse. The reading tells us both of Jesus' imminent departure and his promise of the Paraclete. The basic message of Jesus concerns the peace that he gives to his disciples (Jn.14:27). The peace of Christ is above all, reconciliation with God and of men with one another; it is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal.5:22); it is "serenity of mind, tranquility of soul... a bond of love, a union of charity: no one can inherit God, if he does not keep his testament of peace... (St. Augustine, De verbis Domini serm, 58). Again, the Gospel provides some images of the peace that Jesus gives to us, his followers, through the Holy Spirit. (Jn.14 :26). Like so many things in scripture, these images of God's peace ask us to hold two ideas together that at first glance might not seem to fit so well. As Christians, though, we have practice at this: we believe in God, who treats us with **justice and compassion**. We must do the same to others in order to enjoy peace from God.

Furthermore, the other image of peace we are given is that of the Church in its earliest days, when the Christians who came from a Jewish background argued with those who came from a Gentile background about the meaning and necessity of circumcision for Christian identity from the first reading lies more in how the Church worked out a new peace through disagreement. (Acts 15:1). Each side was given space to represent its position, and each side was heard. In the end, each side also gave up some of its demands, **so that a new consensus emerged**. Council decided that there was no need to follow all Jewish customs (like circumcision) but they did need to follow some, which were considered essential (Acts 15 :28-29), namely: avoid eating of meat sacrifices to idols; 2, avoidance of fornication, which goes against natural moral order; 3, eating food made with the blood of animals. In the end **disagreement was not crushed or avoided but acknowledged**, and people of good will **were led to compromise**. That is a Christian model for peace.

The decree containing the decisions of the Council of Jerusalem was for the good of all who believe in Christ Jesus. Faith in Christ and living morally upright are the key to salvation. Therefore, the apostles place faith in Christ and baptism above Jewish law of circumcision. The synod Fathers said, it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us; thus, the Council's decision was the decision of the Holy Spirit Himself. If we can hold these two points together – the ideal of peace on the one hand and the process of it on the other; then I think, we get some idea of what Jesus means when he says, "peace I leave with you; my peace I give you."

Finally, dear friends, by baptism, people, whether Jews or pagans, become members of a new family of God, all receiving the new Life in the Spirit all becoming God's children, and we are all one without distinction. We are no longer strangers and sojourners, but we are fellow citizens with the saints...(Eph.2:19). May the spirit that guided Paul, Peter and James to find the right answers to the problem and come out with right conclusion inspire us always in our school life, in our work places and our married life to make right decision or judgment. Amen.