

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter  
April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008  
Acts 6:1-:7, 1 Pt 2:4-:9, John 14:1-:12

There's a whole lot more to being Catholic than just being a nice person.

Of course being a nice person is a good thing...

...and we should hope that this falls into place...

...as a result of pursuing more important things.

But if we think that being a Christian just boils down to being a nice person than we have fatally misunderstood what it means to follow Christ. I say fatally because this misunderstanding can lead to spiritual death.

Our first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, shows us the inadequacy of just being a nice person.

In this reading we hear that the Apostles had become aware that some of the poor who were part of the Church were not being properly taken care of. They recognized this as a problem and realized that something had to be done about it. But they also recognized, as our reading tells us, "that it is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table."

The poor had to be served...

...so it is important that we do good things and are nice people...

...but this couldn't then, and can't now, be allowed to distract from the ultimate good of proclaiming the word of God.

Preaching the Gospel was the ultimate good, caring for the poor was a secondary good that flowed from this.

So the apostles appointed men within the church to watch over the poor, but they remained dedicated to their primary task, which was as they put it to “devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

How can this be?

How can speaking, teaching, and preaching be more important than concrete acts of justice and charity?

It’s because in our Gospel reading Jesus said “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6) This is from the Gospel of John Chapter 14, verse 6.

John Chapter 14, verse 6 is one of the single most important verses in the bible. This is one of those verses that is so important that I think we can say that if we don’t understand this verse, then we really don’t understand what it means to be a Christian.

Jesus didn’t say “My teaching is the way and the truth and the life.” He said “**I** am the way and the truth and the life.”

He didn’t say “No one comes to the Father except through treating the poor as I treated them.” He said “No one comes to the Father except through **me**.”

Our ultimate goal must be eternal union with God the Father.

If we end up receiving this, things are going to go very, very well for us.

If we don’t end up receiving this, things are going to go very, very poorly for us.

And no one comes to the Father except through Jesus.

If this is going to happen for us it is going to happen because of Jesus.

It’s not going to happen because of us.

It’s not going to happen because of anything we do.

We are not good enough to come to God the Father on our own.

We cannot be good enough to come to God the Father on our own.

As sinners...

...there is a gap between us and God that we cannot bridge.

Nothing we do can close this gap.

We can't reconcile ourselves to God.

We can't do anything that would earn the forgiveness of our sins.

If these problems are going to be taken care of then they are going to be taken care of by Jesus.

That's how the story goes.

Christ dies for our sins.

Christ reconciles us to the Father.

He is our way, our life, and our truth

We come to the Father through him.

This is so important for us to know because as Catholics we do things.

We go to Church.

We give money.

We give our time at parishes and in schools.

We try to treat others right.

And we should do these things.

It's even the case that the failure to do some of the things I just mentioned is sinful.

But these things we do don't get us into Heaven.

We don't come to the Father because of what we can do.

We come to God the Father through what Jesus has done...

...through what Christ has given us...

...through what we receive from him.

If we trust in the money we give, or in the time we volunteer, or even in the religious actions that we do...

...then we are in a lot of trouble.

Now, if we do these things as a genuine response to God's work in us, then they can draw us closer to him.

But the ground we build on...

...the foundation of our salvation...

...is the freely given life of Jesus Christ...

...offered as a bloody sacrifice for our sins.

It is this...

...the saving work of Jesus Christ...

...our way...

...our life...

...and our truth...

...that we must place our trust in.

Anything else that we place our ultimate trust in...

...will fail us.

Jesus Christ is our...

...one...

...sure...

...foundation.