

«Behold, I make all things new »

(Revelation 21 :5)

Lent Retreat 2022

I AM REPENTANT

Ephesians 2: 11-22

This passage talks about the unity in Jesus Christ. When the apostate Jews considered themselves the only heirs to Jesus Christ, Paul commenced the acceptance of the pagans as members of Christianity as well. Jesus Christ established a church that is open to any human being, and with his blood on the cross, all humans became siblings. He reconciled us in humanity and we became equal in salvation. He died for us and then rose and made us rise and defy death with Him.

Saint Paul recounts these practical pieces of advice as an explanation that our unity comes from Jesus Christ so why allow for conflicts among us? Saint Paul also warns us from the evil powers that are spread around the world and whose aims are to divide the church and directly or sometimes indirectly dissipate the people of God.

If we observe the church, we realize it started in a Jewish and pagan environment. Jesus and His disciples were able to grant the pagans a new identity seeing they introduced them to the Living God. They made them know that God loves them. This is what they were actually missing, to feel close to God because He is love. How beautiful is this comparison that we are loved by a God that we once feared. The pagans didn't know the Lord; they only feared Him; they avoided Him believing this meant living in peace thinking that all the crisis of humanity were because of the rage of Gods. Today that they learned that God does not rage but rather listens, pities, loves and highly appreciates what good the human does, pagans and Jewish know the real God, Jesus Christ. And neither Jew nor Persian, nor a believer nor a pagan can have any credit over the other except if they get close to God through the incarnation of His son Jesus Christ.

Despite the fact that the Jew and the pagan believed in Jesus Christ, conflicts and divisions in church did not finish. In fact, evil still plays a role in dividing people into church groups that do not share the same concept of faith. Nevertheless, the unity that Jesus Christ granted us made of our gaps rich signs that do not comprise grudges and

violence. On the contrary, with our diversity, we grow as a community and as each individual evolves, they make the church evolve along with them.

Throughout the centuries, the church has experienced times of peace but also times of sad divisions. Until today, we still live sanctity and sin in church and “where **sin** abounded, **grace** abounded much more.”(Romans 5:20). This is the conflict between good and evil in the world. We should not be surprised by this then, as we are the ones to decide whether to follow good or evil. And do not say, just as the Jew did before, we are the chosen ones and the others are the defilers or impure ones, for the pagans before and any human today are saints. There are no strangers or guests in the house of the Lord. God’s family has expanded from one people to all the people of the entire world, and thus we are all saints.

The church is the community of believers and each believer has a status in this community. Jesus calls us to complement one another with our talents. These are His gifts for us on an individual and group level. Every gift has its church dimension and its community dimension as well. Our gifts can only be made effective through community not through introversion. So each gift builds the church and the church is but the gathering of our gifts.

Be not scared of sin or weakness. Saint Paul gave us the mechanism of reconciliation among each other every time we damage the love that unites us. This reconciliation towards the right path is optional. What shall you decide then? Go forward with the conflicts that are never-ending or repent and constantly choose to live for Jesus Christ and with him for the saved community?

We must remember that we are on a synod journey that Pope Francis has launched and that ends in 2023. We are all – baptized secular and clergy - concerned with this journey. There is no difference between one another and there is no priority for one over the other. It is the church in a single journey that is not divided. We meditate in our spiritual retreat how we are all one in Jesus Christ. We meditate what our role is in the journey of the church in general and the synod in particular. Do not forget the emblem of this synod: Communion, Participation, and Mission. Three words that unite not divide and of which emanate a single message to whoever chooses Jesus Christ.