**4th Sunday of Easter, 2014 – Cycle A**

May 10/11, 2014

Acts 2: 2:14a, 36-41; 1Peter 2: 20b-25; John 10: 1-10

Happy Mother’s Day! We hear in the Gospel today, “I came so they might have life and have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10) Our moms have truly have given us life, and given it abundantly. Thank you, Mom! God bless you!

There is always a risk in praising mothers on this day, because there maybe one or more of you never knew your mother, like my Dad, whose mom died when he was 3 years old. His only memory of my grandma is of receiving a freshly baked cinnamon roll from her after he had broken his leg, or maybe your mother was sick and limited or perhaps even hurtful. No mother is perfect, and some are less so than others, but the thing that is always true is *we have life because of* *them*.

For all of you here today who are moms, this is a day for you to be grateful to God and to your children for the gift of motherhood each of you has received.

For all of us, today is a day of gratitude for all the good things we have received from our moms, especially the gift of life, and it is a day to renew our commitment to defend human life, especially unborn human life.

Yes, today is a day of gratitude. God is truly good and ***motherhood is very good***. It ***is a noble calling***, a holy gift. God is love, and I believe that in the heart of every mother there is somewhere the same divine love that is God’s heart. Pope John Paul I was noted for saying this 36 years ago, and he caused quite a stir at the time for saying it. But it is true, ***in the heart of God there is that love which he*** ***plants in the heart of every mother***, a love that need only blossom into fullness in the human heart. May each mother present this day give full bloom to their maternal love for their children and families.

I would also like today to offer a few remarks on our readings.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we hear some powerful preaching by St. Peter. *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you!”* he said. It is easy for us to gloss over these words and miss the forceful impact they had on their listeners 2000 years ago, and should have on us today. *“They were cut to the heart,”* we are told. This was some pretty challenging stuff back then. So it must be for us today also.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells us that sheep will only follow the voice of their shepherd – no one else. They run away from strangers. Jesus, we are told, is the *only gate* *through which we can enter into heaven*. Only through Jesus Christ – no one else! ***No one else, only Jesus!*** Let no one deceive us with any other message: Jesus alone is the shepherd, and in him alone is salvation. Only in following Jesus Christ will you be saved. And while Jesus tends each sheep individually, did you notice that Jesus talks not about individual sheep today, but about the “sheepfold.” What his talking about is the Church. Jesus guides the Church. It is in the Church, the sheepfold of God, that we find Jesus and are able to follow him. When we stray from the sheepfold, Jesus reaches out to bring us back into the fold. Jesus reaches out to anyone who strays from the Church and wants to bring them back because the Church is his Body. It is the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.

So, if it is only through Jesus Christ that we find salvation and eternal life, and it is in the Church that we will experience him and hear his voice, then I have a basic question for all of you. Are you a fan or a follower of Jesus Christ? A fan or a follower?

There are many people who can say they are a fan of Jesus. They admire him. They like what he said. They will tell you he is a great prophet and teacher. They are in awe of his miracles. They can recite chapter and verse of the Sacred Scriptures, and can tell you about pious practices they perform. They know well the laws of the Church and claim to follow them. They seem sometimes to be cheerleaders for God.

But Jesus never really asked for cheerleaders or fans, as far as I know. He asked for followers.

“Come follow me!” he said over and over again. To be a follower is far more demanding than being a fan. Fans watch the game being played. They keep score and know the rules and get upset if the game isn’t played strictly by the rules. Follower, on the other hand, most often know everything the fans know, but they go out on the playing field of life. They live the life, a life that will eventually cost them everything they have.

We are attracted to a true follower of Jesus. We sometimes are put off by fans.

It is hard to be a follower if you are not a fan, but it is easy to be a fan and not a follower.

So, sure, be a fan of Jesus, a big fan, but be sure it does not stop there. Follow him. Follow Jesus by not straying from the sheepfold, from the Church. Listen to his voice, only his voice. Follow the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd.