5th Sunday of Easter - Cycle A

Acts 6: 1-7; 1 Peter 2: 4-9; John 14: 1-12

May 21/22, 2011

I have three questions for you today.

First question: “Who here today wants to go to heaven?” Raise your hands if you do. Raise them high now; none of those wimpy hand raises! Wow! Nearly unanimous. For anyone who didn’t raise their hands get a hold of me and we need to talk!

Second question: “Who here knows how to get there?” Raise them up high now… Okay… a few less. Got some work to do.

Third question: “Who knows what your deacons here are supposed to be doing in this parish?” Again, raise your hands high if you know…. O wow! Even fewer. Deacon Gerry, I don’t think we have been doing our jobs very well here.

The answer to question one, “Who wants to go to heaven?” is this – All of us do. It is in our very nature as human beings to want to go to heaven. We all want to go there, even though we have the ability to freely choose to act contrary to this normal desire. We can choose to not do what we naturally want to do.

The short answer to question two, “How do you get to heaven?” is this – Have faith in Jesus, in the One sent by the Father, be baptized, and then do what Jesus did.

The long answer to question two is this: Jesus said today in the Gospel, “I am the way, the truth and the life. You know where I go.” Jesus showed us the way for he is the way. Jesus showed us the Father, who is our final hoped for destination, for God our Father is in heaven, as we pray all the time in the Lord’s Prayer.

What did Jesus do?

When he saw someone hungry, what did he do? He fed him. When he saw someone thirsty, what did he do? He gave him a drink. When he saw someone naked, what did he do? He clothed him. When he saw someone in prison, what did he do? He visited him. When he saw someone sinning, what did he do? He corrected and forgave him. When he was left seemingly totally abandoned by everyone on the Cross, what did he do? He put his faith in his Father.

If you want to go to heaven, do the work of God. And the work of God is to have faith in Jesus, and then do what Jesus did. Follow his example.

Live out in your lives the *corporal and spiritual Works of Mercy!!*

Feed the hungry; give drink to the thirsty; clothe the naked; shelter the homeless; visit the sick; release prisoners; bury the dead; instruct the ignorant; counsel the doubtful; admonish sinners; bear wrongs patiently; forgive offenses; comfort the afflicted; and pray for the living and the dead.

This is the way to heaven. If you want to go to heaven, have faith in Jesus, hope in his mercy, and do the work of God.

That is the long answer to question two.

We cannot really do God’s work unless we see God in each other.

We have three opportunities to see God:

1. In graced moments of prayer when God reveals himself to us;
2. In the Body and Blood of Christ here at the Eucharist;
3. Lastly in his people whom we are to serve, for they are the temples of the Holy Spirit. In prayer, in Eucharist, and in service to others, we see God.

We cannot do God’s work, or get to heaven, unless we pray, unless we gather for Eucharist and eat and drink his body and blood; unless we serve others in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

Third question, “Who are your deacons supposed to be and what are they supposed to be doing in this parish?” The answer is, “We are to be the face of Jesus the Servant of all to you in your particular situation of life. We are to go out and clothe the naked, feed the hungry, teach the faith, preach the Good News, serve the poor, make your needs known here at the Mass.

In our first reading today, we hear that the Apostles in the earliest days of the Church ordained men to the diaconate to go out and preach the faith, to baptize converts and children, to serve the needs of the people and to bring all those needs to the altar, to the feet of the Apostles, to be offered to God in gratitude and in sacrifice. The deacons brought the people and their needs to the first bishops, the Apostles.

Today, Bishop Quinn and nearly all the other bishops ordain men to the diaconate and send them out to parishes to do essentially the same thing. Bishop Quinn sent Deacon Gerry and me to you to:

Baptize your children if you ask us to do so

Marry you

Bury you

Bring you Holy Communion, especially to the dying

To bless you, and to bless your possessions, such as your homes, religious articles

Teach the Faith

To proclaim the Gospel

To preach that Gospel here at this ambo

All you need to do is ask us to do it. We will be happy to respond. Just let us know.

Deacons receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The bishop has the fullness of Holy Orders. Priests are given a share in the bishop’s priesthood. Deacons are given a share in the bishop’s ***diaconia*** at both the altar and in the homes and workplaces and lives of you, the people. The bishop is the foremost deacon in the diocese, and his deacons are given a share in his episcopal service.

Deacons are the bishop’s right arm; priests are his left. Bishop Quinn needs both of his arms to do his job here in the diocese.

A deacon is the “eyes and ears” of his bishop. A bishop sends his deacons into places where he cannot go, and he sends them in his name, and in the name of Christ, in the name of the Church.

We are here to preach and teach, to baptize and to marry, to bury and to bless, to be at your bedside when ill and near death, to bring you Holy Communion. We are here to serve you in these ways.

May God in his infinite kindness and love for you be with you always. May your love for Jesus grow so that you may know the way, the truth and the fullness of life in God our heavenly Father.