
Deacon Bill Demidovich



St. Michael the Archangel

5th Sunday of Easter – Year A (May 10, 2020)

My fellow sisters and brothers in Christ, it is so good to have the opportunity to write to you despite our current environment of global pandemic that does not allow us to meet in person and most especially at the Sacrifice of the Mass and sharing in the Holy Eucharist! I miss you all! Much has happened since my last homily, coincidentally, exactly three months ago. I do hope and pray that each of you and your families are safe, healthy and doing your best. Or as I like to remind myself sometimes in periods of personal challenge by paraphrasing President Teddy Roosevelt, “Do what you can, when you can, where you can.” My heart goes out to all that have lost a loved one, suffered job losses, been ill and all of us impacted by the Covid-19. Finally, please know of the prayers of my family to all of your families. We shall persevere! We shall navigate through this time period by the Grace of God and meet again soon. And most immediately, we can maybe try our best to neither ruminate on the past nor worry about the future, but take on a sense of mindfulness looking at this present time in the Church calendar this 5th Sunday of Easter as we continue to exalt in the celebration of Our Lord’s Resurrection on Easter Sunday! Happy Easter to you! Moreover, we can look to today’s scripture readings to assist us in making a Spiritual Communion with Our Lord, God the Father with the Holy Spirit especially during this time! This Spiritual Communion can then move us to listen, but then also act in ways that can sustain us presently and strengthen us to persevere in our lives no matter the challenges, the losses, the sacrifices we continue to endure because of our unselfishness and sense of service towards others. In doing so, we can gain an even greater sense of **Gratitude** for Blessings received in the past, **Perseverance** in present, and **Hope** for the future!

Our Scripture references outline practical measures of application for today. The First Reading from Acts has a special connection and meaning for me and all deacons as it references what is considered by many as laying a foundation for the Diaconate (from its Greek origins of “diakonia” meaning “to serve”). It is also very meaningful to me since St. Stephen, considered the first Christian martyr and first deacon, was stoned to death just outside the walls of Jerusalem. I was therefore most humbled to stand at the site of his martyrdom while on my pilgrimage to the Holy Land a couple years ago. Stephen known as “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” exhibited great courage during a time of tension between his brother and sister Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jews) and the Hebrews (Aramaic-speaking Palestinian Jews) over the issue of the Hellenists’ widows being forgotten in their daily needs to live. The twelve apostles in their wisdom then, look for assistance from the seven Greek named individuals to assist them in a ministry of helping those widows, a **ministry of charity and service**. The

apostles then can focus on prayer and proclamation of the Gospel. It is noteworthy, I believe to reference our connection to the Mission of the Church for through our Baptisms we are called to be Priests (calling/assisting others to holiness), Prophets (sharing the Gospel message) and especially with reference to this First Reading's story, to be Kings whereby we share in charity and service to others our gifts and treasures. Thus, we see early on in our Church history an example of complementary service, "diakonia" and leadership of the twelve apostles — today's Priests, with the original seven — today's deacons who assist our Priests and in service to others.

In our Psalm today, "Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you," and our Alleluia verse, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, except through me," both leave us with direction and hope. Trusting in the Lord, His words, His teachings, and His love and care, prepare us to receive his kindness, forgiveness, and the Hope and promise of eternal life.

And our Readings conclude with our Second Reading and Gospel which both speak to Houses - an earthly home and then a heavenly home, one might say. First, our earthly home - a spiritual house, our Church made up of living stones (each of us) which prepares us, strengthens our faith daily; and second, our heavenly home which gives us Hope and a place for eternal life.

In our Second Reading we hear St. Peter share with us, in part, that Jesus the stone rejected by human beings becomes the cornerstone, and maybe even the capstone that unites any division in our communities such as we heard in the First Reading with the two pillars of Jews experiencing tension. Jesus brings us together into a spiritual house — our immediate earthly home. And we see in this Reading St. Peter's reference to... "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation"... and thus we participate again in the mission of the church of Priest, Prophet and King with Him!

In our Gospel, we are given great joy in the hope and promise of a room for us all in God's heavenly home and kingdom. Our Lord Ascends from this world to heaven not to abandon us but to prepare a place for each of us. This Gospel of John reminds us what Jesus says immediately to the apostles to allay all their fears, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." And then, Jesus reassures all of them by answering Thomas and Phillip that they know the way to where He is going and that they have seen the Father because they have seen Him, known Him, and now followed Him and His teachings. Thank goodness for Thomas and Phillip, wouldn't you say? Thus, we too are given reassurances by Our Lord and Hope for His heavenly Kingdom!

As I close then, we are all called through our Baptism to be Priest, Prophet and King. I pray my words might help connect each of us, including myself, and in some way allow us a measure of consolation through our gratitude of God's Blessings already received and a realization of hope for our future! And if we can do so, we can concentrate more fully on the present — to model "diakonia" (service) to God, charity to others and taking good prudent care

of ourselves which will help us navigate our journey — especially now when it feels like a “new normal” livelihood changes daily, if not hourly.

And speaking of Service today, a special Wish and Blessing to all of our Mothers on this day, Their Day! Thank you for your service to all of us every day and especially these days when your compassion, care and love during difficult times was and is always the greatest gift one could share with their child no matter our age!

As I mentioned at the beginning, I recommend reciting our prayer of Spiritual Communion (below) during this time of sacrifice from Mass and reception of the Holy Eucharist. I also pray the words, in part, from Psalm 42 (first and last verses) where I know my soul yearns and probably yours too:

...“Like the deer that yearns for running streams, so my soul is yearning for you, my God... Why are you cast down, my soul; why groan within me? Hope in God; I will praise him yet again, my saving presence and my God.”

+May God Bless and Protect each and every one of you and your families!

Happy Easter!

Happy Mother’s Day!

Dcn. Demidovich +

ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.