

# HOMILY ON THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

## THE NEED TO TURN AROUND

No one can correctly say that he/she is converted since conversion is a process. No one is so converted that there is no longer space for improvement. On the contrary, it is the closer we come to God the more we realize our nothingness and our need for Him. Since God is light, we should know that the closer we get to the light the more we discover the little or tiny spots or dirt in his cloth. In the same vein, when we go closer to God, we discover how empty we are and the need to search for Him with utmost diligence and desperation. When St. Augustine discovered Him, after many years of groping in utter darkness, he exclaimed, 'you have me for yourself alone, my soul will never know rest until it rests in you.' Yes our souls can never know rest since nothing material can satisfy it. It is a spiritual being and can only be satisfied not just by spiritual being but by God Himself because our resemblance of God is in our soul. But alas, this reality is yet not known to many that is why many are still searching for the peace of their souls from material things such as wealth, honour, position, power, authority etc. They are truly blessed, who place their trust in the Lord, they are the one that will find solace in their souls. He is the fountain of living water, the more we drink the desperately we thirst for Him. No one has ever tasted from the table of His delight without yearning constantly for more.

Aware of the needs of His children, the Lord keeps calling us to turn to Him if we would experience the rest of our souls as it cannot be found elsewhere. He speaks to us in every event and situation of life but often we are too busy to listen. When we arrogantly wander away from Him, when we dejectedly and pitifully roam in the territory of the enemy in hunger and starvation, He persistently keeps searching for us, calling us to come and share in the abundance of His love, mercy and goodness. But unfortunately, we either do not hear Him because of our noisy nature or we fail to recognize His voice probably because we have shielded ourselves from Him. Sometimes He may call us through sickness, poverty, death of a dear one, failure in business, accident, disappointment etc. some other times He may prefer to call us by taking away any of these, just to let us know that there is a higher power responsible for such changes in the status quo, whom we should turn to. In any of these situations the Lord wants us to withdraw from the world and come to Him for healing. Our failure to listen to such fatherly callings often worsen the situation as it may, and often does draw us farther away from Him thereby increasing our sorrow, misery

and frustration. But if on the contrary, we turn to Him with a repentant heart, there is a divine visitation that brings with it, interior joy and contentment.

He uses miracles to woo us to His side and when we eventually come to Him He gradually withdraws those goodies and uses temptations, hardships, distress, persecutions etc., to strengthen us and thereby making us to atone for our past mistakes and wicked deeds and thus prepare for our heavenly home. But even in those period of desolations, He never abandons us. This is what happen in the conversion of St. Paul. When he was busy breathing fire and brimstone, working for the total extermination of the entire Christendom, Christ was busy searching for him loving with a fatherly care and affection. When he eventually found him, He told Ananias: ‘Saul is now a chosen instrument to bring the gospel to nations kings of the world and I will show him how much he will suffer for my name.

In our life journey, it is often necessary to pulse a little and reflect on the purpose of life, ask ourselves certain fundamental questions such as: Where are we going? Why are we going there? Who sent us? Of what purpose are we sent? Who is our leader? Are we determine to get to our destination? How far have we gone? What is the way forward? Etc. asking and seeking answers to those fundamental questions will immerse us into prayer. Unexamined life, says Socrates, is not worth living.

In prayer we ask certain necessary question that provokes activities. In prayer we discover ourselves in God. In prayer we see how hollow and rotten we are. In prayer we discover the abundance of God’s mercy and the extreme frailty of man. ‘Without me,’ Christ says in today’s gospel, ‘you can do nothing.’ Yes, just as a branch of a tree, important though it is, becomes useless if it separates itself from the trunk, so man, when separated from Christ malfunctions, becomes useless and in fact, is dead. On the other hand, if we unite ourselves with Christ, we can achieve all. Our ministries, because we shall begin to see it as Christ’s ministry, will begin to flourish. Sin will bear no sway in our life, holiness will constitute the topics of our daily discussion, Love will be our second nature, broken home will be no more, the evil of destruction will no longer find a conducive atmosphere to operate. It is then that we will begin to see the world as a preparatory ground for heaven our true homeland.

The authentic love that St. John tell us about in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading can only be possible after we have asked ourselves those fundamental questions as mentioned above and had ordered our priorities rightly. Then will our love be genuinely set to work. St. John here says that we should obey our consciences and never allow anyone to judge

us if our consciences have not judged us. But that can only be true if we have formed a good conscience. Those who have no morality may not understand that it is wrong to kill, commit fornication/adultery, steal etc. John's letter was addressed to Christians so it was taken for granted that every Christian must have a correct conscience. He was therefore, advising us not to allow ourselves to be tossed about since the best judge is our conscience when properly formed.