

Homily -- Regional Encuentro V

April 15, 2018

We gather in the presence of the risen Lord as generations of Christians have gathered – in joy and celebration! We come together to face new challenges within the Church and our society. We give thanks for God’s gift of the Holy Spirit who guides the Church. The Spirit leads us from fear and hesitancy to courage and commitment.

Peter does not condemn those who rejected Jesus and called for his crucifixion. Instead, he offers them an opportunity to repent. We are weak human beings. We are not yet the persons God has called us to be. However, God does not abandon us. He raises Jesus from the dead and calls us to make a decision whether or not to walk in the light – to walk with Jesus in accord with the gospel!

Being a follower of Jesus is not a question only of knowing who he is. It is not enough to master the catechism or to probe the intricacies of church doctrine. Being an authentic missionary disciple means encountering the Lord Jesus – especially as he comes to us in other people, especially those who are vulnerable and suffering – and loving God and our sisters and brothers. Our daily actions must reflect the God of love, mercy, and compassion.

In today's gospel Jesus appears in the Upper Room. His disciples who have heard a report that he has risen from the dead are startled and terrified. Jesus confronts them with his pierced hands and feet. Easter is forever joined with Good Friday. To follow the risen Lord means to follow the one who carried his cross to Calvary. We are not removed from the world by our faith. We are immersed in the real world of suffering to proclaim the good news in word and deed – especially in deed.

Last Monday, Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Exhortation on the call to holiness in today's world. The Holy Father tells us: "You need to see the entirety of your life as a mission. Try to do so by listening to God in prayer and recognizing the signs that he gives you. Always ask the Spirit what Jesus expects from you at every moment of your life and in every decision you must make, so as to discern its place in the mission you have received. Allow the Spirit to forge in you the personal mystery that can reflect Jesus Christ in today's world."

Pope Francis describes the beatitudes in the Sermon of the Mount as "a Christian's identity card." Carry out the beatitudes and you will be a true disciple. He also reminds us of the "great

“criterion” for the final judgment of the Christian life: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcome me. . .” (Mt 25:31-46)

Throughout the Encuentro process you have shared your thoughts, your dreams, your hopes. You have also faced many difficulties and challenges. You have seen how important it is to work together closely –with mutual respect --- in order to be a positive force in your communities and contribute to the broader Church.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is with us today and every day. Pope Francis says that Mary lived the beatitudes as no one else has. “She is that woman who rejoiced in the presence of God, who treasured everything in her heart, and who let herself be pierced by the sword.” She is the saint among the saints, blessed above all others. Dear Lady, help us to be holy disciples and missionaries of your Son! Holy Spirit, incarnate the word of God in our daily lives. *Ven*, Holy Spirit, *Ven*!