

**Homily – Fourth Sunday of Easter
San Fernando Cathedral – May 8, 2022**

First it was Peter at Cornelius' house. The huge barriers between Christianity and Judaism have been torn down. Then, in the great city of Antioch, in Syria, the followers of Jesus have received a new name, "Christians." Paul and Barnabas have been entrusted here to announce the gospel among the pagans.

A beautiful poem of the prophet Isaiah serves as justification for the apostles to preach to the gentiles. Paul and Barnabas speak before a Jewish audience, but with the presence of pagans who were converts to Judaism. Christians proclaim the gospel of life to those who seek it with a sincere heart. The gospel confronts those who try to fit God into their views and agendas; it banishes positions rooted in a prejudiced and exclusionary attitude, which is a sign of death, rather than a way of life.

In the second reading, from the book of Revelation, the white robes and the palms in the hands indicate life after a violent death, like the victory of the risen Lord himself. They are the martyrs. People "from every nation, race, people, and tongue" are gathered together. They are those who have lived and worked for a better world, following the example of Jesus himself. Cultural diversity in the Church is a wonderful fruit of our Christian heritage.

"They will not hunger or thirst anymore," and everyone will drink from "springs of life-giving water." St. John had this symbolic vision of the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to

come. It is what awaits us if we dedicate our lives for the cause of Jesus, which means loving one another as He has loved us.

In the gospel, John presents Jesus explaining – also in symbolic language – who the Messiah truly is. He is not a nationalist leader. He does not come to reign only over some and against others. He is the Universal King. And He knows well how much we need true life. The Jews were not expecting a Messiah who would have to suffer. Jesus says later: “I will lay down my life for the sheep.”

While He presents himself radically powerless, Jesus would also say that He is one with the Almighty Father. Those extremes were quite a provocation! Jesus revealed the true God to us, who is both extremely demanding and also extremely merciful.

Having an encounter with Jesus is having an encounter with God, the giver of life. Pope Francis says that, “for the Church, the Gospel continues to be a vital source of eternal newness, against all those who would ‘indoctrinate’ it in dead stones to be hurled at others.” The Gospel is Jesus himself, the living Word and the living Rock of our faith. The giver of life laid down his own life to give us eternal life and happiness with God. Being followers of Jesus means loving to the extreme – like Jesus did – so that everyone may have eternal life.

Blessed Mother of Guadalupe, Mother of the giver of life, help us acknowledge with our lives that life is the fruit of love, and that the fullness of life is the fruit of God’s love, the Holy Spirit.