
**Homily – Fifth Sunday of Easter
150th Anniversary, St. James, Seguin – May 7, 2023**

Happy birthday, St. James Catholic Church! Celebrating our memory is not only an occasion for great joy, but also for us to raise our awareness of the heritage we have received. The history of this parish is certainly great, but it is much greater from the perspective of our Christian heritage: the risen Lord. Pope Francis extends this invitation for us: “Look at the mercy of Jesus; celebrate with him; keep alive the ‘memory’ of the moment in which we have encountered salvation in our lives.”

Today, we join Jesus at the Last Supper and hear these words: “Do not let your hearts be troubled!” Jesus’ disciples are sad because he says he is going to leave them. They think they will become orphans, forgotten, abandoned. But that is not the case! Jesus is going to prepare a place for them where they will abide in God’s loving presence forever! Jesus himself is the Way, the Truth, and the Life! The risen Lord is with us – right now! Here, in this place and in your homes. Like a Good Shepherd, he gathers us. We celebrate not that some stones have remained together for 150 years, but that we continue to be living stones, honoring the memory of generations before us.

St. Peter says that the risen Lord Jesus is the “stone,” the cornerstone of the community of faith. He is also the solid rock that has sustained this community for 150 years. He was chosen by God for this role. He is rejected by some, ignored by others, a scandal to still others. But to us who believe, he is the stone, the rock, on which

we continue to build our lives and our community of faith. St. Peter also reminds us that we are God's "people," whom God has chosen. We are a dwelling place for the Blessed Trinity, a holy people set apart to live in accord with the teaching of Jesus and the apostles.

The first reading gives us a great example of what it means for us to be a synodal Church. Hellenist Christians spoke Greek as their first language, unlike Hebrews. They brought with them a different background to the early Christian community. They had another mentality, a different culture, and other approaches to the religious traditions of Israel. They brought a new sensitivity. Rather than being rejected as strangers, they were listened. The apostles brought together the community of the disciples and listened to the Holy Spirit, who guided their decision to appoint the first deacons. Diversity seems to make a mess at first, but then the Holy Spirit creates a beautiful harmony out of our differences, demonstrating what a great gift new people are in our lives and communities.

Now we are heirs of that tradition. The resources of the community are to be shared by everyone. And we are all responsible for this – not only the clergy and religious – but every one of us – both those who volunteer their services in the parish and elsewhere. We are the Church! So, let not our hearts be troubled! The risen Lord is among and within us. The Holy Spirit guides us. Let us enter more deeply into God's presence as we pray together today and every day. 150 years are only the beginning!

Our Lady of Guadalupe, show us the way!