

Sunday Homily 5th Sunday of Easter A  
John 14:1-12  
April 20, 2008

By Deacon Jeff Claar

This has been a glorious week to be a Catholic in the United States as we bask in the joy of the first visit of our Pope Benedict XVI to our country. I hope that you made the time to see and hear what he had to say to us as Catholics and to all people of good will. The theme of the Pope's visit was "Christ our Hope" and so indeed He is.

Pope Benedict's message for us this week is that Christ is our Hope and it is only through Christ that our hopes and dreams can be fulfilled.

There is a great danger we face in society today called secularism, and at its root secularism feeds us the lie that the answer to our hopes and dreams is available only through a progressive society. Secularism wants us to believe that if we seek personal freedom and happiness by looking only to ourselves and the government, we will find true freedom and happiness. Secularism wants you to believe the lie that our faith in God is something that we turn to in bitterness and frustration, not something we turn to for hope and eternal truth.

Many of us have already experienced the empty promises of secularism.

Maybe you have pursued financial gain to the exclusion of your family and lost one to gain the other. Maybe you have searched for physical satisfaction without commitment and realized you have lost your dignity by becoming only an object of pleasure to be used. Or, maybe you have dabbled with a faith on your terms, not God's. "I like this, I don't like that; I can decide how and when I will let God into my life."

If any of these sad experiences sound familiar to you, I can tell you that your emptiness is real and you are not alone. There is a real truth and you can have this truth fully only if you allow yourself to embrace Christ completely through the virtues of faith, hope, and charity. We hear this message today in our Gospel, as Jesus tells the Apostles very clearly to have faith in God, have hope in Him, and let this faith lead you to continue the good works of charity he began. And we heard this message repeated again this week as the Vicar of Christ encourages us to place our faith in God, our hope in Christ and continue the good works of charity He began.

Can you see how this message of truth is constant and pure even 2000 years later? And you can be sure that this constant message of truth will be heard here in His Church. So, how do we live out this truth today through faith, hope and charity?

Faith is our virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, as taught by the Holy Church, because he is truth itself. (CCC 1814) It is this faith that makes us seek to know God and do his will. Faith puts us in the right frame of mind and opens our heart to hope.

Hope is our virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the grace of the Holy Spirit.

(CCC 1817) We all long for this happiness in our hearts. We just need to look in the right place for answers. With this hope of Christ, and not the false hope of society, we can turn away from selfishness and seek the true happiness that flows from charity.

And charity is our third and most important theological virtue. It is through charity that we respond to God's two great commandments: by loving Him above all things, and loving our neighbor as ourselves because of the love of God. (CCC 1822) Jesus tells the Apostles, "Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do..." That is why we talk of Stewardship so often, because faith without works is dead. That is why we give generously of our time, and our

talents, and our treasure precisely because Jesus tells us we must. To be less than generous is to try to have faith on our terms, not God's.

My brothers and sisters, the ultimate goal of each of us is to become a saint in Heaven, and it is as simple and difficult as living our lives in faith, hope, and charity. But take heart, because good examples are sitting all around you.

To our oldest parishioners I say thank you. Thank you for your witness of faith through good times and bad. Thank you for your witness of hope in the face of life's difficulties, and thank you for your generous example of charity by building this Church community for us all.

To our "boomer" parishioners I say thank you. Thank you for having faith in the message of Christ as taught by His Church. Thank you for your witness of hope as you raise your children in the faith, and honor your parents by caring for them and thank you for your example of charity awakening in you that continues to sustain the life of this Church community.

And to our young people I say do not be afraid. Do not be afraid to study and live your faith and know that He will never steer you wrong when you listen to His Church. Do not be afraid to live the hope of Christ and seek true happiness through what He teaches you. And do not be afraid to take the charitable example of your grandparents and parents and give generously of your time, your talent, and yes even your meager treasure because only when you step outside of yourselves and give to others will you truly begin to know the real happiness that God has in store for you.