

5<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY of EASTER

May 15, 2022

**COLLECT:** ALMIGHTY GOD, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unit of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen

**THE LESSONS:** First Lesson: Acts 11:1-18

Psalm: 148

Second Lesson: Revelation 21:1-6

Gospel: John 13:31-35

**THE SERMON:** The young mother knelt at the altar railing for communion. She had an infant cradled in her arms. Alongside her was her four-year-old son. The little boy watched as the priest passed him and gave the host to his mother. Following the priest, the deacon also passed the boy and presented the chalice to the mother. As he watched his mother drink from the chalice, the little boy exclaimed in a loud voice; **I want some Jesus too!**

The mother had been wondering when was the right time to let the little boy receive communion. He now had made the decision for her. He knew it was the body and blood of Jesus that people had been receiving. He felt he too should, like the others kneeling at the altar railing, be able to receive Jesus.

The four-year-old had been coming to church with his mother and sitting through all the rituals of a service. He knew Jesus was the most important person of the church service. The priest and others talked about and read

about him. There were even songs about him not only in church but on the radio and television.

Perhaps he had heard the song: Everything Is Beautiful by Ray Stevens:  
***Jesus loves the little children,***

***All the little children of the world,***

***Red and yellow, black and white,***

***They are precious in his sight,***

***Jesus loves the little children of the world.***

Perhaps he had heard that Jesus loved and the closest place a person could get to Jesus was at the altar railing in communion. He had watched as the priest gave the host and as the deacon came along with the chalice, all the while, giving to others but passing him by. He had gotten the blessings, but he knew the most important thing was getting some Jesus. So, he spoke up, **“I want some Jesus too!”**

At that moment, what do you think he was thinking? (*This is a question asked to the congregation—listen to their answers.*)

For the four-year-old that was a defining moment. As a priest I would go back and administer communion to him. Of course, I would wish he was baptized, but I could talk to his mother and do that later.

I want some Jesus too was what some of the non-Jews were also saying. They lived in a community that was segregated into Jew and non-Jew. Jewish laws dictated that Jews would not share common vessels, cups, pots and pans with non-Jews. They were not to enter the house of a non-Jew and certainly they were not to sit and eat with non-Jews.

So, you would understand why they wouldn't include non-Jews in their religious celebrations. Yet, they lived in the same communities.

The non-Jews had heard about this Jewish rabbi who was healing the sick, curing leprosy, restoring sight to the blind and even raising the dead. He also interacted with non-Jews. He drove the multitude of demons out of the man named Legion who was so crazed that the town people chained him and tried to keep him in the cemetery. He would scream and howl day and night. There were times he would break the chains and run screaming and howling naked through the town. When he met this rabbi Jesus, Jesus drove the demons out of him and gave him back his right mind. He had also healed the woman who had suffered with a blood hemorrhage for 12 years (Matt. 9:20)

Jews that interacted socially and in non-business affairs with non-Jews thought it made them unclean and profane. This would exclude them from the temple, synagogue and other Jews until they had gone through the seven-day ritual of purification.

Yet this rabbi Jesus interacted with all people even Gentiles. Not only did he heal them, but he also sat and ate with them. He did not see interacting with the Gentiles/non-Jews making him profane/unclean. Non-Jews began to listen to his teachings, accept the word of God and become his followers.

The disciple Peter was criticized by other disciple for eating with Gentiles/non-Jews. In his defense, he explained to them step by step what had happened to him. While in the city of Joppa he had fallen into a sleepy trance and had a vision. A large sheet, held by its four corners was lowered from heaven directly in front of him. In the sheet were four-footed animals,

beasts of prey, reptiles and birds of the air. A voice from heaven said to me, "Peter; kill and eat." But I replied, "I can't Lord, I have never eaten anything profane or unclean." Then the voice said, "What God has made clean you must not call profane or unclean." This happened two more times and then the sheet was taken back up to heaven.

Peter went on to explain that at that exact moment, three men came from Caesarea seeking him. "They wanted me to come with them to the house of a Gentile in Caesarea. The Holy Spirit told me to go with them, and to make no distinction between them and us. As soon as I got to the house and began to speak the Holy Spirit fell upon them. God had given them the same gift that he gave to us when we first believed. Seeing and experiencing this, how could I not believe that God had given them salvation?"

Peter's explanation to the other disciples showed, he believed, that God approved of Gentiles/non-Jews having some Jesus too. Let us remember that God created all that is and he looked on it and said it was good.

People of St. Matthew's/San Mateo today's Gospel tells us that we should love one another. If we love one another, it is easy for people to know that we are disciples of Christ.

As Christians, we are to love and serve the Lord. It is clearly stated in the post communion prayer of Eucharistic Prayer A, Rite 2, page 366. Through our words and actions, we will show our love for all people. We will acknowledge the dignity of all that we meet as we travel this highway of life.

I ask can you with the desire and intensity of that four-year-old shout out, **I want some Jesus too? Amen.**

Father Lionel Starkes