

HOMILY 6TH SUNDAY EASTER
May 25, 2025

I was reading some articles recently that give me a new optimism for the future of the Church. There has been an increase in the number of people who have found Jesus. In 2021, 54% of adults said that they have made a personal commitment to Jesus. In 2025, that increased to 66%. The majority of the increase was found with young people, Gen Z and Millennials. It is not clear why this is happening and there are probably many factors involved. Our young people have a high level of anxiety, depression and loneliness. They look at all of the divisiveness, violence and hatred in the world and it is sometimes hard to be hopeful. With all of the misinformation on social media and our broadcast news, it is hard for people to know what to believe. What is the truth? I think young people are looking for a higher power, looking for the transcendent, and looking for truth. I think that is what they are finding in Jesus.

The Gospel reading today was part of Jesus' communication at the Last Supper. The disciples did not know it at the time but it was Jesus' "Farewell Address," his "Last Will and Testament" so to speak. Jesus promised us three different things in this reading that are extremely important. First of all, he gives us his word. Many of his words are recorded in Sacred Scripture, but Jesus taught us not just through words but he gave us an example of how we are to live our lives by his example. I have come to believe that the only life worth living is a Christian way of life. There is great truth in Sacred Scripture and in the Traditions of the Catholic Church that just cannot be destroyed.

He promised to send the Holy Spirit to dwell in each one of us. God loves each of us unconditionally, just the way we are today, and wants what is best for us. He knows us personally. He knows everything about us. He is dwelling in us 24 hours per day 7 days a week. He will never leave us regardless of what we do, and he is always trying to guide us, to point us toward what is right. God will never give up on us.

The third thing that Jesus promises us is his peace. His word and his dwelling within us can certainly contribute to that peace, but I have found that regardless of the crisis, regardless of what is going on in my life, I can find peace through prayer. One of the things that can destroy our peace is our emotions if we allow them to do that. We like our positive emotions like happiness and joy and we welcome them. We do not like the negative emotions and sometimes try to deny them or ignore them. This does not make them go away it usually results in a lot of anxiety. I think we need to work through the negative emotions in prayer and seek the wisdom that comes from God. Let's take a couple of examples. Fear is a negative emotion and when we experience fear our bodies respond with fight, flight or freeze. This is a good response if there is a threatening and imminent danger, but most of the time that is not true. We need to take it to prayer, feel the fear, decide what the threat really is, and decide how to respond to it in a healthy manner. Anger is another negative emotion. Our first inclination is probably to blast the person that made us angry, but that is usually not a good thing to do. We can take time with the Lord, feel the anger and identify the obstacle that needs to be overcome. Maybe you need to forgive before you can move forward. Maybe you need to apologize for your part of the problem. Maybe you need to work that out calmly with the individual. Shame is another negative emotion, but you cannot just live with the shame. Take it to God in prayer. When you feel shame over something you have done, maybe you can receive God's forgiveness and make sure the behavior is not repeated. Maybe the shame will prevent you from doing something that you should not do. Maybe you just need to accept something about yourself and decide how you can move forward in a healthy way. Maybe you just need to stop allowing someone to shame you. We need to take everything that is disturbing our peace to the Lord in prayer and ask for his wisdom.

I think we need Jesus in our lives more than ever before. I think that is why more people, particularly young people, are making a commitment to Jesus. The truth of his word, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the peace that only Jesus can give. I think that is what we all need.