

Homily for the 7th Sunday of Easter

May 12-13, 2018

Readings: Acts of the Apostles 1: 15-17, 20a, 20c-26; 1 John 4: 11-16; John 17: 11b-19

Preacher: Sr. Barbara Moore

The Acts of the Apostles describes how the Apostles filled Judas' place. The text says, "...the lot fell upon Matthias." And in a play on words, one could say that "a lot" did fall on the shoulders on this new Apostle: the memories of the one he replaced, the challenges of a new community, and questions about their future.

But this last Sunday of the Easter season, offers us as "church" many qualities that have the capacity to enable growth and life among us. The Gospels and most of the letters came in the first century and our major creeds unfolded in and beyond the fourth century.

They were both a community's honest attempt to understand this Jesus of Nazareth and how to organize themselves in service. They were developed in the context of very different worlds, political systems and diversity of cultures. Our task these days is to dialogue with them, converse with them and try to live them in our current diversity of cultures and political systems—in a world that has brought us together by a click of a button.

This is not an easy task for the modern church. Perhaps these readings can be of assistance to us as we live out the daily message of the one Paul describes this way; "God was in Jesus Christ." Or to put it another way, how do we live the life, message and ministry of Jesus Christ—as God desires us "to be, live and have our being"—in the now?

1 John repeats the familiar saying, "God is love!" Not, "God is judge, God is jealous, God punishes, God excludes, or God has favorites." Love is an act of the will, not necessarily a feeling. Thus, we are challenged to "love our enemies." How much that message is needed in this poor wounded violent world. How

much we need this message in a world that accepts lies, diminishment of the other, alternative facts and narcissism. In our Gospel, John shares Jesus' reflection that oneness is his desire. In addition, so is the truth of God's Word, and Jesus' request that we are protected as we serve our brothers and sisters.

The older I get the more I realize that Christianity is hard business. In 1900, G.K. Chesterton wrote, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried." It is not difficult to see many examples of this reality these days. Tax "reform" that Christian politicians say helps many—even though the facts show the wealthiest benefit the most. Christian politicians who deny the damage being done to our planet and or refuse the call for limits on violence through reasonable gun control. Christian politicians who disparage "others" who are different from themselves and diminish long respected aspects of government.

This last Sunday before the Pentecost event, points us to the "oneness, truth, and inclusivity that is needed in the midst of diversity" that the Holy Spirit can facilitate. As the great preacher Barbara Brown Taylor says, "You and I carry dual citizenship." We are part of our culture and world. We appreciate its beauty, yet know its limits. To that world we bring our citizenship as Baptized Christians. Within our limits, we seek love, unity, truth and inclusivity.

May the gift of the Holy Spirit find us again and again "trying" to live this message of Christ's love, truth and oneness.

Amen