



**Sixth Sunday of Easter (Year A)
50th Anniversary of Doubleview Parish**

Homily

**Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth**

**Sunday 14 May 2023
Our Lady of the Rosary Church, Doubleview Parish**

As we move towards the great feast of Pentecost, the Church, in her liturgy, invites us to attend more and more to the promise of Jesus to send us the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Today's gospel certainly does this, reminding us that Jesus, at his Last Supper, speaks of the Spirit of Truth who will be given to us and who will remain with us forever.

Next Sunday we will celebrate the Feast of the Ascension - the Lord's return to his Heavenly Father, taking our humanity with him to its rightful place in heaven - and the following Sunday we will celebrate the great Feast of Pentecost, the birth of the Church under the power of God's Spirit.

The promise of Jesus to send his Spirit was not made only to the twelve apostles gathered in the Upper Room with Jesus. Rather, through them, it was made to the whole Church - to all of us - who as long as we remain united with each other and with the Lord, can be confident that we are on the right path.

For fifty years this parish of Doubleview Holy Rosary Church, under the care of the Dominican friars, has been striving to live in this communion with the Lord and with his Church, and today we are celebrating all the ways in which this community has been faithful to this call.

At the same time the invitation is there for each of us, in the depths of our heart, to recommit ourselves to being people of communion and unity in our life within the Church, and never people of dissension and disunity.

This call to unity is at the heart of the mission which Pope Francis has identified as the urgent task for the Church today. As some of you would know, the Pope has convened a Synod of Bishops, a gathering of representatives of the world's bishops, which will commence in Rome in late September.

One of the unique elements of this Synod will be that, unlike other synods in the past, there will be lay people, religious and clergy who will also be present and who, along with the bishops, will have the right to vote. In this way the Pope is wanting to remind all of us that, because of our baptism, we all share responsibility for the Church's fidelity to the Lord. It is true that the bishops, as successors of the



apostles, have a particular role to play in this, but they exercise that role from within the Church, not outside it and certainly not above it - which means, of course, from within the community, not outside it, and certainly not above it. We are called to walk together, and not in separate groups, in the way of the Lord.

If this is true for the whole Church all around the world, it is true for the Church here in Australia, here in the Archdiocese of Perth, and here in the parish of Doubleview. Pope Francis is asking each one of us to realise that we are all meant to be active members of the Church rather than passive members; to be contributors to the mission of the Church and not just recipients of what the Church has to offer; to be builders up of the Church rather than tearers down.

The Pope uses three words for this and they are the theme of the forthcoming synod - communion, participation and mission.

The celebration of a fiftieth anniversary is a good time for a parish community to reflect on how it is going in relation to these three aspects of Catholic life. To help you do this I wanted to offer you a few thoughts on what these three ideas might look like in practice.

Communion, for Christians, is really tied to the idea that we are made in the image of God. It was Jesus who finally revealed the great unexpected mystery: that there is indeed only one God, as the Jewish people had always known, but that God is a communion of persons: Father, Son and Spirit. To be made in God's image, then, is to be made for communion and not for isolation; for giving as well as for receiving; for loving as well as for being loved, for this is what is at the heart of the life of the Trinity: giving and receiving, loving and being loved. The Lord's call to us to build up others and help them to flourish, rather than the opposite, is at the very heart of our vocation as Christians. Each one of us, then, might ask ourselves: does this characterise my life and presence in this parish community? Am I a builder or a destroyer, a person of unity or of disunity?

In one way or another this will also call for our active participation. We cannot be bystanders in our community; we are called to be involved. But at the same time not everyone can do everything. Our own individual situations vary: some have more time than others, some have greater financial resources, some have particular gifts that others lack, some have health issues others do not: participation can take many forms and no-one should be made to feel guilty if circumstances limit what they are able to do. But we can all pray for each other, be gentle with each other, be understanding of each other's circumstances, and be encouragers rather than wet-blankets in our life within the Church.

For Pope Francis the qualities of communion and participation are meant to lead to mission. Each one of us is called to share the beauty of our faith with others so that they, too, might come to know the love of God. It is good sometimes to remind ourselves that we have been given the gift of faith not because God likes us more than he likes others, or because we have done something special to deserve this precious gift. Rather, we have been given the gift of faith because, in God's mysterious plan, we have been chosen to be the special instruments through which God wants to share the gift of



faith with others. We might wonder why he has chosen us instead of others who might be more talented, or more generous, or would seem more likely to succeed. The fact is, God has chosen us. This is our privilege and our heavy responsibility. How are we doing in responding to this wonderful but daunting call?

Today I would encourage you all not to be afraid or discouraged. Don't doubt that you have all you need, as a community, to respond to God's call. You have the wonderful witness of the clergy, the religious and the countless other people whose lives of faith in this parish over fifty years have enabled us to gather this morning in this beautiful church. You have the witness of the ongoing commitment of the Dominican friars and sisters who are so much a part of the life of the parish today. You have the faithfulness of your community to the Church not only when it is easy to be faithful but also when it is hard. You have the gratitude, admiration and support of your archbishop. And most of all you have the unbreakable promise of the Lord himself who said that he would send the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth, who will be with you forever.

May the next fifty years be marked by the same courage, faith and openness to the presence of the Spirit which, over the last fifty years, has laid such strong foundations for all that lies ahead.