

Matthew Gill

Homily for the Seventh Sunday of Easter 2017

Today we celebrate the seventh Sunday of Easter. It's the Sunday in between Ascension Thursday when Jesus ascended into Heaven and Pentecost Sunday when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Twelve Apostles in the Upper room. This Sunday is a moment of waiting. If we were to go back in time we would find the Twelve Apostles in the upper room with Mary. The first reading said, "When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying..." all of the disciples, "devoted themselves with one accord to prayer" and they did so with Mary, the blessed Mother. And so I'd like to focus in on waiting, patience and expectation.

There are many times in life that we must wait. I would like to propose just two types of waiting which we may find ourselves in. The first: a nervous waiting or time of anxiety. There are certain moments that cause of us great distress, maybe a loved one is close to death or maybe we're awaiting the results of a medical test. For someone in school it might be waiting to hear back from a college. Others may be looking for work but not finding any opportunities. All of these

situations can cause anxiety and distress. What should do if we find ourselves in such a painful time of waiting? Well, maybe an example might be of some assistance.

You may remember King Henry VIII of England from history class. After the Pope refused to annul his marriage he broke off from the Catholic Church and made himself the Supreme Head of the Church in England. He required that all clergy and government officials recognize his new title. Thomas More, the chancellor at the time refused to acknowledge this title and resigned from his post. He was eventually placed under arrest for treason and imprisoned in a tower for close to three months. During these three months of awaiting the King's action More remained at peace and even joyful even though he realized that the King could possibly sentence him to death. While he was imprisoned in this old and dark English tower he wrote to his daughter to comfort her. He said, "I will not mistrust Him (God), Meg though I should feel myself weakening and on the verge of being over come with fear... I shall call upon Christ and pray to Him for help. And then I trust he shall place his holy hand on me." Now, most of us are not waiting in a tower for a death sentence. But there moments in life that fill us with anxiety and it is in these times that Christ calls us to great trust. We

must abandon ourselves into the arms of Christ as St. Thomas More did. Trust in God's goodness is our answer to fear and anxious waiting.

The second form of waiting: Impatience. There are moments where we think to ourselves, "if only this thing in my life were to happen, then I would be truly happy." If only I finally found my future spouse or if only I had that next promotion. You see we can live our lives from one milestone to the next without realizing that God is present to us even in the mundane and simple aspects of daily life. How about another example... Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan may not ring a bell for many people here but he can certainly teach us about living in the present moment. He was a bishop in Vietnam in the 1960s and 70s. In August 1975 he was arrested by the Communistic Vietnamese government and placed in prison for thirteen years, nine of which were in solitary confinement. During his time in prison the bishop he adopted the words of an earlier missionary priest and said, "I am not going to wait. I will live each present moment, filling it to the brim with love." The bishop was imprisoned for years! Yet didn't take the attitude of, "Oh, if only I were out of prison. If only I could be free, then I would be able to go back to my diocese and be a shepherd to my people." Instead, Cardinal Van Tuan would send out secret notes to the people in

his diocese, he celebrated Mass with little bits of bread and wine and even converted his prison guards. Cardinal Van Tuan shows us that just because our present conditions are unfavorable doesn't mean that God cannot be at work right here, right now. God is in fact always at work in our lives and it is in the present moment that we find Him.

Waiting can sometimes be irritating. It can be frustrating. When we find ourselves in situations beyond our control we have two responses as Christians: we trust in God's goodness and we live in the present moment where He is always close by. Giving into to useless fear or anxiety leads to despair. However, the Christian is known by his or her hope! On the other hand, to simply wish away the present moment means that we are ignoring the unexpected ways in which God could be trying to reveal Himself to us. If we go back to the Scriptures for the day we might be able to find one more key aspect of waiting... the Disciples waited in the presence of Mary the Mother of Jesus. She is the perfect model of all virtues and we see in her perfect patience and resignation to the will of God. Pray to Mary, ask her to trust in the Lord, to see Him at work in your life. She is your Mother and just as she waited and prayed with the Twelve disciples she will also pray for you and wait with you. Amen.

