**“Do not let your Hearts be Troubled or Afraid”**

Why do we let our hearts to be troubled? Or why are we afraid? This is an implied question by Jesus in our Gospel reading today. Whenever we let our hearts be troubled, or we are afraid, it is because we are afraid of the outcome of something. Jesus is telling us that He has left those who believe and trust in Him, His peace. His peace He left us is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

As Jesus is exhorting His disciples not to be afraid, He told them about His gift of the Holy Spirit He would ask the Father to give us. It is the Holy Spirit would provide the nourishment we would need to be grafted to the Vine. The Holy Spirit is the bound that unites us to Christ, as a branch is united to a vine. So, when our hearts are troubled or we are afraid, it is because of lack of trust in the Holy Spirit and in the promise of Jesus Christ.

Our lack of trust in the Holy Spirit and the word of God means we are listening to the world that cannot give us peace as Christ does. It means, we are allowing the Devil to trick us into believing in his lies and deception and not in the truth of Christ. If we allow the Devil, his lies would lead us to eternal destruction.

The word, **“Do not let”** means we have been given the power not to allow ourselves to be deceived by the world and the Devil. It means, we are been equipped with the gift of free will to keep our focus on the straight and narrow path. We can either ‘let’ God or let the Devil. It is our choice. But Jesus is telling us that there is only one choice, only one truth, and only one way to the Father.

In our first reading, we heard how the first Christians overcame the lies, deception, and chaos of the world and the Devil. We heard about how some people with their own agenda were going among the Gentiles preaching another gospel. They were doing this probably out of being blinded by their past or lack of knowledge of the teachings of Christ.

After much discussion and argument, Paul, Barnabas, and others were appointed to go to Peter, the first pope and the rest of the apostles in Jerusalem for final decision. They did not tell everyone to go with their conscience or just do what feels right. Instead, they went to higher authority the Apostles in Jerusalem.

So the first Council was formed in Jerusalem. Peter stood up and laid the foundation for their deliberation. Well, sisters and brothers, there was no Bible at the time. They could not look up chapters and verses in the Bible that would direct them about Jesus’ teachings.

How did they come up with a solution that everyone could follow the teachings of the Church! It was by remembering what they heard from their Master while He was with them and they listened to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The solution they came up with was, it is not by Circumcision but Baptism that is the gate that is needed to becoming a Christian.

By the way in our first reading yesterday, in Acts chapter 16: 1-10, we had about how twice the Holy Spirit prevented Paul and his companions from going first, to Phrygian and Galatian territory to preach. The second time, form going into Bithynia. My sisters and brothers, you better believe it the same Holy Spirit is and will continue to act in the Church today and until the end of time.

When we consider our present Church, we find that there are some bishops and priests preaching a different gospel about abortion, contraception, same sex marriage, and other teachings contrary to the teachings of the Gospel passed on to the Church by the apostles. We find that the more things change, the more they remain the same.

It is troubling to note that as our horizontal relationship with each other grows and as the world grows in knowledge of the universe, our vertical relationship with God is declining even faster. It is sad that in many instances, we have allowed our horizontal relationship to cloudy our vertical relationship with God.

As we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist let us ask for the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that will be one.