



Archbishop of Montreal

Homily
Sunday May 10, 2020

Fifth Sunday of Easter - Year A (bilingual homily) Jn 14, 1-12

Draw near to the Lord Jesus.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As you are confronted by the COVID-19 pandemic, do you feel overwhelmed? Is your heart heavy? This could be for different reasons.

On this Mother's Day, perhaps you remember your mother who died or who lives isolated at a residence, with you unable to see her in her final moments. Perhaps you wish to celebrate your mother who is far away, with no way to see her in person.

On the other hand, as we are in a period of confinement, maybe you are worried about what is going to happen next. With all what is on your mind right now, how can continue to live with the constraints linked to necessity of physical distancing, with all the precautionary measures to protect ourselves, yet continue to strive forward?

Saint Peter tells us: "Draw near to the Lord, draw near to the Lord Jesus."

As we live through this pandemic, the Lord does not leave us alone. He is by our side, he is with us. He wants to be close to us, and we can call on him. We can learn to ground ourselves ever more deeply in him.

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. To approach Jesus is to approach the one who is the way, the truth and the life. Not in an abstract way, not a mere idea, but in the concreteness of our personal life, in our current situation such as in our family, but also in society and even all humanity.

Jesus draws near. He is the way. He is the way even now, when we do not know at what pace the present confinement measures can be brought to an end, without undue risk. At which speed should we deconfine? How do we do this? All we know for sure is that we need to be more patient than ever.

Jesus is the way, and when we approach him, he helps us on the way. But which path, exactly? By the path of prayer, we can open ourselves to the grace of God. No matter who we are or where we are, we are called to a way of service. We are always called to love, we are always called to a love that is concrete and shows itself in service to those around us. Even if tomorrow is unknown and we are afraid, today, we are called to pray and to love, here and now. Even if we are preoccupied with concerns that are legitimate, maybe incomprehensible but apparently unavoidable, we cannot allow these concerns to take over our life or distract us from prayer, service, and attentiveness to the presence of the other.

Service is a humanizing path. It is a path of humanity. Service is a way through which we can grow. Even when we do not know what tomorrow will bring, what gives meaning to what we

are living today is prayer and service, service to others, whether in our families or in society as a whole, doing our best with the means at our disposal.

Jesus is the light. And light is important. In the night, when there is no light, what do we do? We do not move, we must stay put, we cannot take a single step.

But even a little bit of light helps us to move forward. A light in the night, no matter how small, even if much darkness remains, lets us begin the way. Jesus is the light that gets us on the way. Jesus is the light that tells us that it is worth living, it is worth loving, it is worth advancing, it is worth moving forward.

Jesus is the Light that enlightens us in our personal, family, social, and religious lives. Let us seek together the Light of the Lord to be guided by the Lord. Seek the Spirit who guides us on the path of the Lord, who is the light, who is the truth, who is the light.

Jesus is the life, he is also a life. He is the source of life. Lord Jesus is not just one life among others. He is The Life itself, with a capital T and a capital L. He is the life that gives life.

In different ways throughout the Gospels, he says: "I live by the Father. As I live by the Father, you live by me."

Jesus invites us to live by him. He is the source of our life because he is the way, the truth and the life. It is he who guides us, he gives us life and protects us. He guards our soul, our heart, and our generosity.

It is not only our health that needs to be protected, but our heart as well! Our human, family and social relationships also need protection. In life, our heart lives by a soul open to God and calling us to prayer. We pray that our soul remains protected so that we will emerge stronger from the challenges of this pandemic.

Even as the Government slowly lifts the confinement measures, we will continue to be affected by the pandemic. In this situation, we are called to move forward, relying on Jesus Christ by living by Jesus Christ, always in a spirit of service to others.

Today is Mother's Day. Perhaps on this Mother's Day, when our hearts are filled with love for our mother, we are also experiencing the limits of our ability to reach out and hold her, to express our affection for her.

Maybe we could, together in prayer, turn to God and say to him: "Lord, I thank you for the gift of my mother." Again, take the time to stop and say: "Lord, I thank you for the gift of my mother."

Whether she has already died or is still with us in this world, we say: "Lord, I thank you for the gift of my mother."

Let us keep this thought safe in our heart, remembering her in silence, and giving expression to our thoughts of affection and understanding: "Lord, I thank you for the gift of my mother."

This Mother's Day is a time to thank God for our mother and to embrace our mother. Maybe it is a time to think about our family and all families. And through this pandemic, as families we are getting together in our own home, as "the nuclear family," as we say. As such all over the earth, what was at stake? I would say, what was left? What is left all over the earth? In each home, there is an individual and a family. And God. To God we can turn wherever we are, however lonely we are, however isolated we are. We can turn to him in whatever is the situation, whatever is the situation of our family, of society. Everyone on this earth, at any time, can turn to God.

And in this pandemic, maybe we rediscovered this. And as we are in confinement, maybe we rediscovered in a new way how important our family is in our life, but also for the whole of

society. In society, many things are important. But family is the basic unit of society. No family, no society.

And in the Church, maybe we rediscovered the family. There is this classic expression, the family is a domestic church. Maybe in this time we think often in terms of this world that we live in. We think often of individuals, and we have many laws and many things and many people or institutions who take care of the individual. But somehow, the family, we don't always think about the family. And maybe one of the fruits of the pandemic, one of the good things that could come out of this pandemic, is the rediscovery of the family as a domestic church, for the whole Church, and as the basic unit of society.

In that sense, maybe the pandemic is an occasion to rediscover the sense of Sunday. The sense of Sunday as a day for the Lord, and Sunday as a day for the family! A day for the family. Sunday as a day for rest. Sunday as a day for the family. And maybe somehow, we don't know how, Sunday has become or is like a day like any other day. We live in a time frame where it is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Maybe we really need to reconsider Sunday. Maybe we need to reconsider that it is not just an option, it is necessary to rediscover the seventh day.

The day of rest. And then, make out of it a day for the family. A day when everyone of the family can be together. Everyone in the family is there. It cannot be only something a decision that a family takes on itself, without the others, because it only works when we do it together. Sunday can become a day of the family only if we do it together. Only if society cooperates, Sunday becomes a day for the family. We are between this Sunday, this day of the family, and the Father's Day that we will have in June, maybe between the two, we can consider Sunday as a day for the family. As a day when we think of what we believe, as a day for the Lord, as a day of the Lord. And even as we live in this world, this earth, we take it as a day for the earth, because the earth also needs to catch a breath. Happy Mother's Day!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Christian Lépine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

† Christian Lépine
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