



Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Jesus said to those Jews who believed in him, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, 'You will become free'?" Jesus answered them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. A slave does not remain in a household forever, but a son always remains. So, if a son frees you, then you will truly be free. I know that you are descendants of Abraham. But you are trying to kill me, because my word has no room among you. I tell you what I have seen in the Father's presence; then do what you have heard from the Father." They answered and said to him, "Our father is Abraham." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works of Abraham. But now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God; Abraham did not do this. You are doing the works of your father!" So, they said to him, "We were not born of fornication. We have one Father, God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and am here; I did not come on my own, but he sent me."

Introductory Prayer: Lord, you are life and truth and goodness. You are also peace and mercy. How grateful I am to have this moment to turn to you. Without you I can do nothing good. In fact, when I do good, it is you working through me, despite my failings. Thank you, Lord. Here I am ready to love you more.

Petition: Grant me the grace, Lord, to remain in your word and to be set free by your truth.

1. A Vibrant Faith: Faith isn't real until it touches our attitudes and, above all, our concrete choices. To "remain" in the word of Christ means to conform our lives with his life and his virtues, especially the virtue of charity, which is the very essence of Christian doctrine and morality. To "remain" in his word is, as some would say, "to walk the walk." In another passage we are told that it is not those who say "Lord, Lord..." who will enter

the Kingdom, but only those who actually do the Father's will in their lives. Remaining in his word is the stuff of sanctity – it's also the stuff of daily perseverance and of knowing how to get up, dust ourselves off, and begin again each time we falter or fall along the way. How well do I “remain” in Christ's word? Could an impartial observer see from my attitudes and actions that I follow Christ?

2. A True Disciple Lives the Truth: Christ seems to imply that there are true and false disciples. There is only one way to tell the difference between the two: whether one actually embraces his word not only as an ideal, but also as a rule of life. Today a plethora of voices, even within the Christian community, would have us follow a purely “therapeutic” Christianity – a form of Christianity in which we can supposedly believe in Christ while adopting behaviors or attitudes which are totally opposed to his “way” of discipleship as taught authoritatively by the Church. The temptation to separate faith and practice is never far from us. How much have these false voices impacted my own understanding of what it means to follow Christ as a member of his body, the Church?

3. Authentic Freedom: The freedom promised by Christ to those who remain in his word is much deeper than the freedom offered by the world. Christ's freedom is not simply a political freedom. Neither is it the ability to choose whatever I want, when I want, and how I want. The freedom of Christ's disciple is spiritual, moral, and interior; it is the freedom for which every person longs in the depths of his heart. And only Christ gives this kind of freedom.

Conversation with Christ: Thank you, Lord, for the freedom you have given me! With it I could seek happiness in broken vessels of clay, forgetting you, the fountain of living waters. You could have made me not free.... But thus, you have created me, and I want to be free. I want to know how to be free. I want to demonstrate that I am free, with the most sovereign act of my freedom: Lord, since I am free, I give my freedom, my will, to you, so that your will may be done.

Resolution: I will exercise my freedom responsibly, as Christ would have me do.