



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of Communications

Transcript: Bishop David J. Walkowiak's Homily – Solemnity of Pentecost, May 31, 2020, Cathedral of Saint Andrew, Grand Rapids

My brothers and sisters,

For 50 days, the Church has been celebrating the Paschal Mystery, the death, resurrection and glorification of Christ. We are really celebrating God's love and we remember the words from the Third Chapter of the Gospel of John which really sum up the Gospel that 'God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life.'

We live because Jesus lives. Now Jesus lives no more to die and that is our blessed hope. We will die, but because of our belief in Him, we can now hope to join Him in heaven.

The Easter season comes to an end today. We must pray that the love we have celebrated during these 50 days will be put into practice in our daily lives. But God has already answered this prayer. Jesus accomplished the redemptive work His Father gave Him to do, and so He has ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father in glory. Yet, the kingdom of God, while begun, is still a work in progress until Christ comes again at the end of time; that is why the Father and the Son sent forth the Holy Spirit so that, through you and me, the kingdom may advance, more and more over time, here on earth. The Holy Spirit empowers us, each of us, to put God's love into practice and to witness to it.

So, we also share in Christ's mission; this mission which is stated every time that we pray the Our Father: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus grows His kingdom through our words, through our actions, through our lives.

As citizens of this kingdom, what are we working to build? Not an earthly kingdom as we understand it; the kingdom of God here on earth is to be a kingdom of justice, love and peace. And where that justice and love and peace of the kingdom is to be found is in the hearts of men and women. That's what we're striving for, to have justice, love and peace abide in our own hearts and to do our

best to see that it does so in the lives of others. That is the good news and we are part of it with God's help. The Holy Spirit gives each of us the grace, the courage to speak what needs to be said and to do what needs to be done to bring about justice, love and peace, not only in people but in the larger society in which we live. But how well we know that the kingdom, while begun, is certainly not here in its fullness. Think of the anger and the violence that is exploding across our country today. Why? Because of the lack of justice, love and peace. The flash point, sadly once again and far too often, is racism: institutional racism, cultural racism, personal racism. We have viewed on TV an African-American man shot to death while jogging. We have viewed on TV a handcuffed African-American man being arrested with three policemen kneeling upon him, one on his neck for eight minutes.

We are disciples of Christ; we are citizens of God's kingdom of justice, love and peace, and those are not mere words. We cannot remain silent and indifferent to injustice, hatred and violence directed at any member of our human family. Acts and attitudes of racism are sinful and they reveal a failure, a failure to acknowledge the value and dignity of the persons who are subjected to this evil; failure to see in each one of them the neighbor that Christ calls us to love.

If we find ourselves angry about the breakdown of civil order now happening across our country without first feeling anger about what happened to these two men, we have a blindness. We need to pray 'Holy Spirit help me to see.' But the Spirit will help us to see. That's the good news. The Spirit will help us to be people of justice, love and peace in our own lives. We can look into our hearts and see honestly what we find there. May we find there the desire to uphold the dignity and value of others when we encounter jokes, comments, stereotypical thinking and complaints that spring forth from prejudicial roots. Our second reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians proclaimed to us this morning: 'For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons. And we all were given to drink of the one Spirit.'

My brothers and sisters, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, poured out upon us anew, are cause for great joy today. We have every reason to be confident; we have every reason to be filled with hope. We can do our part because we are baptized and we share in Christ's mission, and we can contribute to the building up of that kingdom of justice, love and peace that must ultimately reside in the hearts of everyone. May the Holy Spirit enkindle within us the fire of God's love so that we may join together to renew the face of the earth. Amen.