

4th Sunday of Easter, yr. A, Xavier Church, Acts 2, 14a. 36-41; Ps. 23, 1-6; 1 Pet. 2, 20b-25; John 10, 1-10

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Introduction: This Sunday, the Church celebrates Vocations Sunday. This year's theme is: 'To carry Christ into the world'. It is a call not to keep our faith to ourselves, but to share it with those around us, especially those who do not yet know Jesus Christ, including many young people. For those moments when we kept our faith to ourselves, when we did not share the Good News with others, let us ask forgiveness from God.

Dear brothers and sisters, on the poster here below me you can see some young people, carrying a big cross. It is the cross of the World Youth Days, which goes around the world in advance and was also in the Netherlands last winter. The cross does not seem an attractive sign for a religion. It was a cruel instrument of torture used by the Romans. Yet the cross has become the preeminent sign of Christianity. And why? Because the cross is the sign of hope, because Christ has conquered death. He has risen!

St Peter says it very clearly in the second reading: Jesus died on the cross for us, for the sake of our sins, so that we might die to sin and go and live for righteousness. Well, last Thursday was King's Day again and while I wish everyone a nice party, I do sometimes wonder: should it be like this, with so much beer, so much noise, so much trash? Drug trafficking in our city and in the Netherlands and the associated violence have increased dramatically, and the authorities can barely keep it under control. This is far from the justice Peter speaks of. Peter is also speaking in the first reading, calling us to 'Save yourselves from this degenerate generation!'

What he means by this is that people come to live by the power of the sacrament of Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. This brings with it the forgiveness of sins. Those who live by the grace of Baptism will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. That Spirit who makes it possible for us to live in peace and joy, with those around us who are dear to us. And even with our enemies. For the apostle Peter also calls us to patiently endure what we have to suffer for our good deeds. After all, this is how Christ suffered for us, giving us an example.

Those young people in the poster carrying the cross must realise this. Today, the Church prays for all proclaimers of faith and in particular for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life. The priests provide the sacraments, allowing Church life to continue. The deacons help with works of charity and in addition, they are also proclaimers of the Gospel.

And the religious provide places in this world, the monasteries, where it is good to be, with their hospitality, their chants and to be in silence, with God.

For young people, this is a radical choice, that you do not go for a good salary, for luxury, pleasure and status, but that you dare to choose the void, where you can find Christ, and people who you can serve. Jesus showed that He was all about us. He gave Himself completely to us - a God who shows that service to one another is the highest good.

Jesus is the good Shepherd, saving His sheep and leading them to pasture and life in abundance, spiritually, morally and materially. Thieves and robbers lead people to violence, sending their people to war. But also closer to home: thieves and robbers are people who are not authentic, who do not keep their promises, who lie. Them we should not follow. But let us always follow the voice of God, which resounds in the depths of our conscience. Then the doorkeeper will open for us, God himself, who leads all believers to Jesus. God gives people to Jesus so that they care for their fellow believers. They are the people, who uphold the whole building of the Church. Amen.