

**Blessings from your pastor Father Vic Gournas**

**ACTS 15:1-6**

**When I read in the Acts of the Apostles (Mass reading this Wednesday): “When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the Church, as well as by the Apostles and the presbyters, and they reported what God had done with them.”**

**Imagine what is going on in the early church while Christians are writing: Acts of the Apostles, The New Testament Catholic Epistles, and the Early writings of these Catholic Christians: Notice most of the emphasis isn't on what the worldly powers (Nero, Diocletian, and the Roman Emperors) are doing to kill, maim, and persecute the Christian Catholic Church, but what God is doing through the power of the Holy Spirit. How does the church keep growing with such a hostile world and anti-Christian Roman Culture? I think one reason: These first Christians are authentic and living in joy. They are focused on what God is doing.**

**In this crazy world: Perhaps we could learn something from this letter found in the Morning Office (Liturgy of the Hours) read by the Universal Church on this day of May 18.**

**This letter was sent from an unknown Greek Christian writer to Diognetus. Estimates of dating based on the language and other textual evidence have ranged from AD 130 to the late 2nd century, with the latter often preferred in modern scholarship.**

**From a letter to Diognetus  
(Nn. 5-6; Funk, 397-401)**

***The Christian in the world***

**Christians are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life. Their teaching is not based upon reveries inspired by the curiosity of men. Unlike some other people, they champion no purely human doctrine. With regard to dress, food and manner of life in general, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in, whether it is Greek or foreign.**

**And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labor under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country. Like others, they marry and have children, but they do not expose them. They share their meals, but not their wives. They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they**

**are citizens of heaven. Obedient to the laws, they yet live on a level that transcends the law.**

**Christians love all men, but all men persecute them. Condemned because they are not understood, they are put to death, but raised to life again. They live in poverty, but enrich many; they are totally destitute, but possess an abundance of everything. They suffer dishonor, but that is their glory. They are defamed, but vindicated. A blessing is their answer to abuse, deference their response to insult. For the good they do they receive the punishment of malefactors, but even then they rejoice, as though receiving the gift of life. They are attacked by the Jews as aliens, they are persecuted by the Greeks, yet no one can explain the reason for this hatred.**

**Christians love those who hate them just as the soul loves the body and all its members despite the body's hatred...The soul, though immortal, has a mortal dwelling place; and Christians also live for a time amidst perishable things, while awaiting the freedom from change and decay that will be theirs in heaven. As the soul benefits from the deprivation of food and drink, so Christians flourish under persecution. Such is the Christian's lofty and divinely appointed function, from which he is not permitted to excuse himself.**

**Vivat Jesus: And may we always ask for the virtue of Fortitude and to Persevere for the prize of Eternity and Eternal Life. That means Forever!!!!**