5th Sun of Easter: Christ compels a choice.

The presence of the risen Lord and the Holy Spirit impacted the early Church, and the effects were a loving, serving fellowship among believers, strength, and growth in number. However, the early Christian communities were also faced with issues of administration, misunderstanding, and relationships. This is what plays out in the first reading of this Fifth Sunday of Easter, taken from the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles - Acts 6:1-7. How some of these issues were resolved, and the institution of the diaconate for the service of the community (Acts 6:1-7).

In our second text, St. Peter advises the early Christians to renew the memory of Jesus by allowing God to make of them "living stones" and build them into a spiritual edifice, a community of believers, with Christ as its "Living Cornerstone" (I Pt 2:4-5). St Peter also reminds us of our new identity as dynamic disciples of the Lord, as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God's own people."

In the Gospel passage, Jesus consoles his apostles (who are sad and disheartened at His announcement that He will be leaving them soon), by assuring them that he is going to prepare an everlasting accommodation for them in His Father's House in Heaven. He gives them the assurance that he will come back to take them to their Heavenly abodes. *It is then that Thomas says, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?"* Jesus answers Thomas' question with, ***"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."***

The basic doctrine of Judaism is that Yahweh is the Way the Truth and the Life. Hence, Jesus is making a revolutionary claim that he is equivalent to Yahweh. Jesus also declares that he, himself, is the safest and surest way to God, discrediting the notions that all religions are equally sure ways to reach God, and that no organized religion but only living a good life of sharing love is necessary to reach God.

CHRIST IS THE WAY, the access, and the path to the Father and to God's kingdom. Christ is the mediator between God and his people, reconciling and bringing us back to God through the sacrifice of himself. No one else, and no other doctrine can achieve this reconciliation with God. CHRIST IS THE TRUTH by revealing the knowledge of who God is. CHRIST IS THE LIFE – by mediating salvation, which is eternal life.

Jesus compels a choice: According to Bishop Robert Baron, in his commentary (the Word on Fire Bible, the Gospel). "Either Jesus is who he says he is (in which case we are obliged to give our whole lives to him, making him Lord of every aspect of our

personality and every dimension of our society), or he is a madman (in which case we should be against him).
What does not remain, as C.S. Lewis saw so clearly, is the bland middle position that, though he isn't divine, he is a good man, kindly, wise, and an ethical teacher. If he isn't who he says he is, then he is not admirable at all; instead, he is guilty of making the most insane and outrageous claims of any major figure in world history".

"Thus, Christ with this statement simply compels a choice, a decision, in a manner that no other religious founder does. The Buddha could claim that he had found a way, that he wanted to share with his followers, but Christ said, "I am the way". Mohammed could say that through him, the final divine truth had been communicated to the world, but Christ said, "I am the truth." Confucius could maintain that he had discovered a new and uplifting form of life, but Christ said, "I am the life." And thus, we are either with Christ or we are against him. No other founder forces that choice as clearly as Jesus Christ does".

Now the question is this; are you for Christ or are you against Him? Do I give Christ my life, in every aspect, or not? God bless you, and your family. Amen.
Fr Martin Ezeihuaku.