

HOMILY

THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart

March 26, 2020

By Father Anthony Marques

There has been understandable outrage over the scenes of college students partying along beaches in Florida and elsewhere during spring break, as the coronavirus pandemic continued to spread.

Those scenes were exhibits of carelessness, self-centeredness, and even defiance.

It was a poor example—unconscionable behavior.

On the other hand, many people have been giving good example but observing the necessary safety precautions and caring for those in need.

For Christians, example is something more profound: witness.

Today's Gospel reading focuses on that theme.

Witness is a leitmotif in the Gospel of John:
Jesus is the perfect witness of God.

He is the Word who abides with God,
and who has been sent into the world to reveal the Father's love for humanity.

All of Jesus' words and miracles—"signs" in John's Gospel—show forth God:

"The works that the Father gave me to accomplish,
these works that I perform testify on my behalf
that the Father has sent me.

Moreover, the Father who sent me has testified on my behalf."

Jesus' interlocutors and adversaries refuse to accept his testimony.

(By the way, the Gospel of John refers to these people as "the Jews," which is a literary construction rather than a historical fact.

The term does not refer to all Jews, either at the time of Jesus or since then.

After all, Jesus and his disciples were themselves Jews.)

Returning to these adversaries,
they do not accept Jesus' "word," meaning his revelation.

Why?

The problem, it seems, is not a lack of intellectual comprehension;
it is their closed and hostile attitude to what Jesus offers.

The tone of exasperation in Christ's words points to such an attitude:

 "The Father who sent me has testified on my behalf.
 But you have never heard his voice nor seen his form,
 and you do not have his word remaining in you,
 because you do not believe in the one whom he has sent.
 You search the Scriptures,
 because you think you have eternal life through them;
 even they testify on my behalf.
 But you do not want to come to me to have life."

The role of a Christian is to give witness—to Christ.

We can strengthen our witness by stretching our openness to Christ,
by being willing to change in whatever ways are necessary.

Our good example will then radiate in testimony to someone greater,
who bestows new life on all who seek it.