

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 3, 2026

Text: 1 Peter 2:2-10 (Epistle);

Other Texts: Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60 (First Reading); John 14:1-14 (Gospel)

“Craving Pure Spiritual Milk”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Life is busy. Obligations at work and home. Even vacations are busy: time spent organizing, packing, doing all the things we are trying to fit in, and then packing and returning back to the duties we took a rest from. Interestingly, in today’s Epistle, the apostle Peter reminds us Christians that our life is also a busy one. One of leaving things behind even as we are being built into something new. One from which we neither get, nor should want, a vacation.

“So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.”¹ Of course, no sin is okay to keep, truly all sin must go. But here St. Peter mentions these sins in particular. Why? Because these sins tear communities apart, poisoning relationships, for they destroy trust. The trust that is required in marriage, family, friendships, *and the fellowship of believers in the congregation*. So we must put them away.

We must put away malice—hateful feelings and grudges—by forgiving those who sin against us in imitation of God’s forgiveness that we have not earned, but have received by grace. In true spiritual wisdom, we recognize that not every sin against us is intentional thereby applying Peter’s words later in this letter, “keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”² More, in true spiritual wisdom we realize that, honestly, not every “sin” against us is actually a sin at all, but only viewed as one due to easily hurt feelings and egotism.

We must put away deceit and hypocrisy, attitudes, words, and actions that give another the impression of our love, friendship, and fellowship, but which are used to hide, cover, our real thoughts, words, and actions that are underhanded, lying, betraying, towards them. What destroys trust more than these! So replace these with honesty and loyalty, for Christ Jesus is the Truth, so we must live truthfully. And He is loyal even unto death, so we are to be as well.

We must put away envy, desiring that which another has, being jealous of them, which is *coveting*. We put it away by being content with where God has placed us in life, satisfied with what He has given us and, more, looking out for the good of others, seeking their betterment, even as Christ gave up the glories of heaven seeking our good. And we must put away all slander. Our tongue must not be used to put others down, to make them look bad, especially so that somehow we look better. No. Our tongue is to be used to praise God, speak His Word, and build up our neighbor even as Christ, the Word, gives and sustains our lives in body and soul.

Yes, we must put these away. They bring only harm, destruction. But when these sins are replaced with the holy virtues mentioned, not only is the bad not occurring, God works blessings

¹ 1 Peter 2:1. All quotes are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

² 1 Peter 4:8.

through the good. Harm is replaced by help, destruction with construction as trust grows and the bond of love and peace is strengthened in the true fellowship in Christ and His Spirit.

This command is critical. Ignoring it leads to loss of faith for the person and great harm upon others. Yet, they are not easily put away, are they? Our sinful nature clings to them tightly as it clings to us tightly. These sins, like sins in general, are more than just outward behaviors; they are rooted deep in us. Hypocrisy seeks to look like holiness, envy hides behind polite words, etc. So this putting them off is avoiding the outward acts, certainly, but it is also mortifying the inner dispositions that bring them forth. That's why putting them away is not a onetime action, but a daily battle. It is drowning the old sinful self every day with the new man arising every day.

How is this done? It is good to see and know that this command *is not first*. We do not *become* Christians by cleaning ourselves up. No. We put these things away because we are already clean in Christ, forgiven our sins, and so have already become His Christian people.

Just a little before today's reading, Peter had written that we have been born again through the imperishable seed of the living and abiding word of God.³ Now he writes: "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk."⁴ The Word connected with the water in Holy Baptism brings forth a spiritual newborn. And *that same Word* is the milk that the soul continues to need for spiritual life, for it is the source of our spiritual nutrition, the one thing necessary⁵ until our souls have passed through the gate of death into the nearer presence of God in heaven.

A newborn infant may not know a lot, but they know at least two things. First, they know when they're hungry. Second, they know their mom is the one they need when they're hungry. And when that hunger is up, they accept no substitutes! So it is with the Christian.

Our soul is hungry, our spiritual life is weakening, so we go where the milk is provided, our mother, the Church. For she has the Word of her Savior who is the Bread of Life in abundance. He is in the reading and preaching of the Word, in the Word of Absolution, the visible Word of the Lord's Supper, in the Word-centered hymns and liturgy. Of course we should be in the Word every day, in Bible reading and devotions. Without such our spiritual life is malnourished and so suffers. But as the Promised Land flowed with milk and honey, so within the Divine Service the spiritual milk overflows as Christ Jesus, forgiveness of sins, and all spiritual blessings are given in abundance! In fact, it is the one who regularly attends public worship that is far more likely to also be in regular devotion. The feast leaves one wanting more!

But the Church is not only responsible for providing an abundance of milk, but also, as Peter reminds us, its *purity*. This is the uncorrupted Word. No additives of human speculation or tradition that are put on par with it. No nutrients removed by watered down teaching and preaching that seeks to make people happy, that does not warn them against ongoing sin, that does not challenge them to grow in grace and holiness, not according to what the world and flesh call good, but what God's Word calls good. And especially, no poison of false teaching. Nothing

³ 1 Peter 1:23.

⁴ 1 Peter 2:2.

⁵ Cf. Luke 10:42.

less than the full counsel of God, the Word in its truth and purity, so that Christ's people know their Savior in faith, experiencing God's grace, that is, "indeed tasting that the Lord is good."⁶

And the Lord is good indeed! For the One who feeds on the pure spiritual milk of the Word, who receives through faith the Christ revealed and given in that Word, is the recipient of so much. You are a stone, but not a dead one. All of us, living stones, living in the Holy Spirit, being built up into a great spiritual house, the body of Christ, who Himself is *the* living stone, for Jesus is risen! Yes, rejected by men, and women, past and present. But chosen and precious to God. Precious as His only-begotten Son. But also precious as His Incarnate Son, Godman, whom God chose from eternity to save fallen humanity by His holy life and innocent suffering and death upon the cross as our substitute.

Jesus is the cornerstone. All who are united to Him by faith are built by Him into the great spiritual temple of God. But for those who resist the Word, Christ crucified and risen is a rock of offense, and they stumble on Him, the One who has saved them, but a salvation they refuse because they will not believe the Word, its call to repent, its call to trust in Christ Jesus.

Those who resist the Word, who are offended at Jesus and stumble over Him, remain "not a people," they are still outside of mercy. Not because of God, but because of their own stubborn sinful refusal to repent and believe. *But not you. You have* tasted the Lord's goodness.

You are a chosen race, *God's people*, for *He has called you* to be His own in Baptism, electing you in Christ from eternity. You have received mercy in Jesus for both here and eternity. A calling and mercy of pure grace by which you receive a new and glorious identity.

You are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, offering spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through faith in Jesus Christ, the great High Priest. What are these holy sacrifices? They are both internal and external. Internal, in your spirit, there is faith that endures temptation, trials, and bearing the cross, prayer that is both constant and sincere, and a heart of thanksgiving for blessings of body and soul, which can rejoice even in suffering in confidence that God will bring forth the good He promises.

External, in your life, is the proclamation of His excellencies, especially being called out of the darkness of sin, death and damnation into the light of life and salvation. A proclamation made as you offer the sacrifices of confession of your faith before others, of praising the Lord for His goodness, daily bread for both body and soul, the certainty of life with Him forever, and serving others with true good works, building each other up as we practice holy virtues, works of Christian charity and love, the Ten Commandments proven to be the guide for your life on earth.

"Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation." God gives the growth, but it is not automatic. Physical growth happens by taking in nourishment, so too spiritual. "Longing" is weak, the word means a deep desire, an intense craving, that doesn't end with an intention, but with result. This means a disciplined engagement with the Word, feasting in Sunday worship, then eating more every day. To have that craving is

⁶ Cf. 1 Peter 2:3.

an evidence of the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration. To not crave, to not be hungry is a sign of spiritual weakness, ill-health. God fill us with the desire to feed deep and often! Amen!