

Reflection for the 5th Sunday of Easter, Cycle C

The lectionary translation of the readings for this Sunday can be found at <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/051825.cfm>

1st Reading: *Acts 14:21–27*

This is the end of what is called Paul's first missionary journey. Notice that he returns to communities which he had started, strengthens them and appoints elders to guide their growth as a community of disciples. Then he returns to the Church that sent him and reports on his efforts to carry out the mission. The elders, by the way, are the ones who became the priests in order to help the Bishops with Mass and sacraments.

2nd Reading: *Revelation 21:1–5a*

This selection is from the last real chapter of the Book of Revelation; Chapter 22 serves as an Epilogue. In this selection God is beginning to make everything new. Note the comment that God lives with his people. It's more than just living in our trailer court; his presence makes life better for us.

Gospel: *John 13:31–33a, 34–35*

"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Jn 13:34-35

Gospel Reflection

I really like Acts of the Apostles, the book of the Bible from which our first reading is taken. I like to imagine what life was like for the early Christians. You know... they still had the original apostles and everything. I bet it was cool! Can't you just imagine them getting up early in the morning, all excited to go to church. No... I'm just playing with you... They didn't have churches back then... They were Church! And, as Church, they gathered together in one of their homes toward the evening.

Today's readings are all about being Church. Acts of the Apostles says "they called the church together" Acts 14:27, not "they called the people to go to church. The gathering song at the beginning of Mass is supposed to call us together. It is supposed to help us come together as the community of disciples we call Church. That's why it's important that we arrive early enough to help sing that song, acknowledge the people in the pews around us, and try to become one with them.

Imagine, for a moment, that you are one of the disciples to whom Jesus is talking in today's Gospel selection. You've been with Jesus and this community of disciple for anywhere up to three years. You feel Jesus' love for you personally; it's intense. You've come to really know and love the other disciples in the group. You feel love for the group itself and you feel loved by that group... Sit with that feeling for a moment.

When Jesus gives the commandment to love one another, in today's selection, that is what he is talking about. He is not talking about the generalized love Christians have for all of God's children. He's not talking about loving our enemies. Those admonitions show up in other parts of the Gospel. In this part,

he is talking about being the community of love that his disciples were when he walked the earth and led them himself.

When we do that, we become aware of his presence in the community... and, that's the gift. Being the community of love that the disciples and Jesus were when he walked the earth, makes his spirit present. Remember Mt 18:20 - "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Right now we are talking about this intellectually, but by truly entering into the Community that is Church, we actually experience his presence and know the truth of these Scriptures experientially. There are other ways of experiencing his presence at Mass, but this one shouldn't be overlooked. It has made the Mass meaningful to so many people.

And we are not just a community that comes together to be Church and love one another and experience the Lord's presence. We are also a community of our Lord's presence in the world. That is how we are God's "dwelling... with the human race." Our Lord is present to us in very special ways during Mass. And, at the end of Mass, we are dismissed to make him present in the small moments of our day-to-day lives out in the world. That is what the Church being the Body of Christ, as St. Paul taught, is all about.

So, as we continue with our Mass, let's remember that it is an expression of who we are as a people, a community of unity and love, a community wherein God dwells with his people, a community of God's presence in the world, a Eucharistic community – the Body of Christ. Let's allow ourselves to be changed by his presence among us and take his presence with us when we go, out into the world.

God bless...

Personal Reflection:

"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Jn 13:34-

35

Question:

What words or phrases attracted your attention during the Liturgy of the Word on Sunday? What connection do those words or phrases have to your day-to-day life? (Why do you think they attracted your attention?) What might God be trying to say to you through these words or phrases? What response should you make? What action should you take?

Alternative:

Share about/Reflect upon the extent to which you feel a part of the community with whom you gather for Sunday Mass. What kinds of things do you do that helps you feel part of that community? What else can you commit to doing?

Verse by Verse:

Jn 13:31 "When Judas had left them..." | Our selection today is part of the Last Supper story. Our selection occurs after Judas leaves. Judas' leaving to go to the synagogue officials begins the chain of events, Jesus' passion, death and resurrection, which results in his glorification.

Jn 13:31 “...Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” | Son of man, which literally means “human being” is used as a title for Jesus. When used in this manner, it appears to me that it means Jesus is the fulness of human being. AYB states that “glory involves a *visible* manifestation of God’s majesty in *acts of power*. The manifestation of power would be Jesus’ passion, death and resurrection.

AYB points out that Origen (c. 185 – c. 253 CE), in his exegesis of this reading, described “glory” as “knowing God and being known by God”. It seems to me that this means that, through his death and resurrection, the human Jesus came to (would come to) knowing the Father and being known by the Father in the deepest way ie. Living the fullness of the life God has given and experiencing its fulfillment in the Resurrection.

Jn 13:33 “My children...” | AYB points out that “there is evidence that a Jewish teacher might well address his disciples as “children”.”

Jn 13:33 “...I will be with you only a little while longer...” | This gives the discourse the nature of a dying person talking to his children.

Jn 13:34a “I give you a new commandment: love one another.” | Note that Jesus is talking to his disciples. This is not the general commandment to love others and does not include love of enemies. Those are stated in other places. This one is about the love that Jesus’ disciples should have for one another, the group of disciples, the Church.

Jn 13:34b “As I have loved you...” | Jesus gives himself, his love for the community of disciples, as the model of how they should love one another. This is a love they have all experienced. AYB points out that Jesus’ love is effective, it brings about the objective of that love, their salvation. This is shown by his acting out that love by laying down his life for their salvation.

In 15:11 he repeats the commandment and adds a comment about laying down his life. That is what he means by loving as he has loved us. By being willing to lay down our lives for the other, he doesn’t mean to be willing to lay down our lives to save someone else’s earthly life nor does he mean we should be willing to die for a concept, like freedom. Those are admirable, but here Jesus means to be willing to lay down our earthly lives so others may have eternal life, like he did.

Jn 13:35 “This is how all will know...” | If the love in the community of disciples is continued as it was when Jesus was physically with them, people will notice. AYB, moreover, points out that this love “will keep the spirit of Jesus alive among them.” It also points out that Jesus’ love for them is constitutive of the community; it creates the community. We know that Jesus is present in this love. See Mt 18:20, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”