

Fifth Sunday of Easter - Yr. C

[Reading I: Acts 14:21-27](#)

[Responsorial Psalm: 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13](#)

[Reading II: Revelation 21:1-5a](#)

[Gospel: John 13:31-33a, 34-35](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/051522.cfm>



Son of Man glorified

The Gospel passage follows after the washing of the disciple's feet at the Last Supper. Using his own action as an example, Jesus calls them to love one another through loving service, just as Jesus had done.

Jesus passion and death is imminent and Jesus instructs the disciples that his death is not a defeat but the way to victory. Jesus will be glorified through his death. He will also show in a deeper way, his loving service to the human family.

Jesus then offers a new commandment. Loving neighbors or even the alien, is not new (Deut 6:5, Lev 19:34). The love of the disciples is to be modeled on the love that Jesus has shown in laying down his life for them. As followers of Jesus, loving others is not about the minimum love that one can show. Loving as Jesus loved implies not counting the cost and investing one's whole self for the good of another.

There are many examples of this self-emptying love. Parents caring for sick children, those caring for someone with dementia, or those who serve the forgotten or marginalized in a variety of circumstances. Those who have shown exemplary service like this are called saints, like Mother Teresa of Calcutta or Father Damian of Molokai.

These saints remind us of God's enduring love for us. Jesus poured out his life that we may experience in the words of St. Paul, the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ (Eph 3:18).

In the Acts of the Apostles, Paul and Barnabas continue their ministry. In the section between last week's reading and today's passage, they experienced suffering and persecution. In Lystra, Paul was stoned and left for dead. These passages highlight how suffering does mean defeat for God can work through suffering, just as Jesus suffered, to fulfill God's plan. Paul and Barnabas are laying down their lives for the people in the cities that they visit so that they may come to know God's redeeming love.

This passage also presents an early example of church structure. Elders are appointed through prayer and fasting. It is a prayerful and reflective process to choose leaders for the community with a recognition that God will working through those who are chosen for they "commended them to the Lord." Formal structures developed over time and grew into the three-fold ministries of bishop, priest, and deacon. From the beginning though, it was recognized that structure was needed to keep the community focused and organized.

Paul and Barnabas were not operating on their own. They were sent on mission by the church in Antioch and at the end of the passage they report back to the community all that God had done including opening the door of faith to Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas were accountable to the community in Antioch. Accountability continues in the church today. The structure provides ways for people and groups to work in harmony toward to bigger goal rather than lone ranger activities.

The Book of Revelation presents a vision of the new reality that comes from Christ act of love. It acknowledges the pain and suffering of the first Christians who were being

persecuted by the Roman Empire for refusing to worship Caesar and the Roman state. Many had lost loved ones and were trying to connect these losses with the victory of Christ. John presents a vision of the ultimate victory in the form of a new heaven and a new earth. When God's reign is fully established, there will be no more death or mourning for God will wipe away all tears.

The two symbols of a city and a bride convey important qualities. The city highlights the communal quality of God's work. God works in and through community. The scriptures often refer to God's people. God is in the midst of communities who gather in faith. In Matthew, Jesus is quoted as saying, that where two or three are gathered, I am in their midst. The bride image brings an awareness of the intimate love that God has for the community. "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race.

God's plan was not just to offer salvation from the old order of humanity but to bring about a new order in which God will be at the center of life and relationships will be life giving. God has a new vision in which pain, suffering, and death will have no place.

Reflection Questions:

Have you had experiences where suffering led to a greater good?

How have you experienced God's love for you?

How will non-Christians know that you and your faith community are disciples of Jesus?

How is Jesus new commandment different from other commandments?

How are you showing God's love to others?

Themes

New Commandment to Love One Another

Suffering in the Christian life

Church Order and Structure

New creation

Prayer Suggestions:

For the grace to love as God has loved us: that we may have the courage to lay down our lives in service of one another and for those who are most in need

For freedom of mind and heart: that God will free us from old attachments and help us follow the movement of the Spirit into new relationships and new forms of service

For newly established churches and for newly organized parishes: that God will strengthen their spirits, help them form supportive relationships, and guide the development of ministries and services

For those who strive to manifest a New Heavens and a New Earth: that God will inspire those working to end injustice and poverty, assist the elderly and homebound, and be a source of hope for all who are suffering