

## Fifth Sunday of Easter

[Reading I: Acts 6:1-7](#)

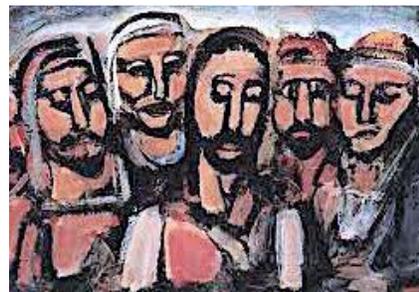
[Responsorial Psalm: 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19](#)

[Reading II: 1 Peter 2:4-9](#)

[Gospel: John 14:1-12](#)

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

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/050723.cfm>



Georges Rouault, Christ and the Apostles,  
1937–38

The selection from the Acts of the Apostles points out that divisions, biases, and conflict are part of human nature and have existed in the church from the earliest days. The conflicts between Aramaic-speaking and Greek-speaking Jews existed for many years before the church. The Hellenists were Greek-speaking members of the community. Widows and orphans were the poorest in society. Women and children depended upon husbands and fathers; if they died, they had no source of livelihood or place to stay. The Hellenists made it known that they thought the widows of the Hebrew-speaking part of the church were getting more support, and the Greek-speaking widows were being neglected. The care for the poor and those in need has been part of the church's life from the beginning.

In response to the conflict in the community and to improve the assistance, the Apostles decided to appoint some Hellenists to oversee this assistance. They broadened the ministry of the church to meet the needs that existed. These seven men came to ministry out of everyday life. *Diakonia* is a Greek word that means service. It can be used as a general term for service as a waiter serves at the table, or it can be used for those who dedicate themselves to a life of service. The church continues this ministry with both transitional and permanent deacons. Transitional deacons spend an internship as a deacon on their way to ordination as priests. Permanent deacons are ordained later in life, often married, and committed to serving the needs of a parish.

The passage from the First Letter of Peter continues unfolding the meaning and significance of Baptism. Although the leadership of the Jewish community rejected Jesus, he was affirmed by God, who raised Him up. Jesus, living as a human and offering a challenging message, is a stumbling stone. The way to God is through Jesus, and those who reject him follow a path that diverges from God.

The last two lines of the reading present a beautiful image of who we are called to be. *Chosen Race* /a people of his own: The chosen aspect reflects God's choice to be in relationship with you and to include you in a special people, the people of God. In times past, this has been misused to promote prejudice and racial superiority. The chosen race is not from our perspective but God's, and all who respond and come to know God are part of God's chosen people.

*Royal Priesthood*: Royal has to do with the king, who was the anointed of God. God set them apart for a special task of focusing the people on the task that they were to do. Priests were the ones who brought the people's prayers and offerings before God. The title, royal priesthood, is given to the baptized who have been anointed and chosen by God to bring the prayers and needs of all the human family to God in prayer. We are called to be intercessors.

*Holy nation:* To be holy is to be set aside from the ordinary, to be other. To be God's people is live differently than the rest of society. The way of Jesus and his message is different from the way of society in both his day and our day. The beatitudes catch a lot of this difference: To be dependent upon God, desiring justice, to be merciful, to be single-hearted, to be peacemakers, to endure suffering for doing right, and to forgive those who wrong us. This is a different way to live.

The Gospel brings out the disciples' fear as Jesus approaches death. The fear also existed in the early church when Jesus did not return in the decades after his resurrection. What were they going to do? Jesus assures them that he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. They are connected to him and the Father by faith, by the Holy Spirit who dwells within them, and by the works that they do. Jesus did what the Father asked of him, and they could see it in his life. Just as they do the work that Jesus did, they will realize they are connected to Jesus and the Father. He is the Way by how he lived, and we follow that way in the way we live. Jesus is the Truth not as static answers but in the living, dynamic relationship He has with the Father. As we share in that relationship, we are in the Truth. It is not how much one knows but how one lives the truth. Jesus is the Life. He is the source of life, the spring of living water that nurtures and renews. As we follow the way and live the truth, we fully enter life. Not even death could take life from Jesus, and when we are connected to Him, we will have life to the full.

**Key themes:**

Service and the ministry of deacons  
Holiness                      Chosen People

Priesthood of the baptized  
Unity with Christ and the Father

**Reflection questions:**

Who are the powerless and needy in our society?

Have you seen or participated in any outreach programs for those in need?

What does it mean for you to live a holy life?

How can you intercede (priestly) for those in need?

How have you experienced God's presence in the deeds you have done and the actions that you have taken?

**Prayer suggestions:**

For the church: that we may recognize that we are a chosen and holy people, living stones, whom God is creating into the Body of Christ, to announce the deeds of the Lord,

For fuller discipleship: that God will guide us in living sacrificial lives and continuing the ministry of Christ in laying down our lives for our families, our communities, and our society

For all who serve the poor, widows, orphans, and the forgotten of society: that God will renew their hearts and strengthen their spirits as they continue to reach out to those in need

For all burdened by worry and anxiety: that they may find in Christ hope, freedom, and peace