

Read



Acts of the Apostles
14:21-27

Psalm 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13

Revelation 21:1-5a

John 13:31-33a, 34-35

LIVING THE WORD

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 19, 2019



REFLECTION

The love Paul and Barnabas share with the early Christians sounds infectious in today's First Reading. As they journey across the land to faraway places like Lystra and Antioch, Paul and Barnabas share the Good News with Gentiles as well as Jews. Early house churches were formed and organized so that followers could pray and fast together. These early communities surely practiced the new commandment Jesus shared at the Last Supper in John's account of the Gospel. "My children . . . 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" (John 13:34). At this point, Jesus was sharing this commandment with his intimate circle of friends and disciples. He was asking them to focus on loving each other despite their faults and failings. Paul and Barnabas then became an extension of this commandment by teaching and sharing with the new communities of followers. Authentic community takes work and Jesus' commandment assists all in making it happen.



ACTION

Focus on your "house church" by attending youth group this week even if you have never before attended a meeting. Do not let excuses get in your way as there are always reasons to avoid something unfamiliar or different especially when you are up to your eyeballs in responsibilities. Introduce yourself to the youth minister and other volunteers. Meet kids from your high school and other schools and jump into the opening activity. Your involvement will help put you at ease as well as those around you.



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ In what ways could you show more love to those around you?
- ❖ In what ways could you show more love to yourself?



May 19, 2019

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LECTIONARY #54C

Acts 14:21-27

Psalm 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13

Revelation 21:1-5a

John 13:31-33a, 34-35

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

Each of today's readings shows a different way the Lord loves his beloved people: in the establishment of his Church on earth; in the promise of the resurrected glory and eternal dwelling we will have with him in heaven; and in the giving of a commandment meant to spur us on with passion and zeal for him. Today's Gospel gives a brief flashback to the Last Supper when Jesus is gathered with his Apostles for the final time prior to his Crucifixion. He encourages them to recognize that what's about to happen, though scary and confusing, is in pursuit of something greater—the ultimate expression and establishment of unending, abundant love.

Q FOCUS: *The abiding love of God is meant to radiate from our own lives.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On May 22, the Church remembers St. Rita of Cascia, a woman of great faith even in the face of immense pressure to abandon her religion during her eighteen years of marriage to a cruel man. Her resilience and endurance, and her eventual joining of a religious order and reception of the wounds of Christ's crown of thorns, are evidence of how love of the Lord can translate to a life well lived and a passion for loving others.

Church Teaching Connections

“Along with the virtues, this means above all the new commandment, the first and the greatest of the commandments, and the one that best identifies us as Christ's disciples: ‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you’ (John 15:12)” (*Evangelii gaudium*, 161).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 13:31-33a, 34-35

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

When Judas had left them, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and God will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. 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.”

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

► Can you imagine being at the Last Supper and hearing Jesus say, "I will be with you only a little while longer"? What would you have thought about this comment?

► Was Jesus just trying to indicate that the meal was almost over, or that perhaps he was going to travel somewhere different on his own in the coming days? What is he referring to?

The Apostles didn't necessarily realize that this was the "last supper" or that these were some of Jesus' final words to them before he would be condemned to die. In hindsight, they probably realized that what he said was alluding to the coming suffering he would have to endure.

► Why wouldn't Jesus want the Apostles to come with him to his death? Why die alone? What will this accomplish?

We are at the midpoint of Easter Time. It seems odd that we should backtrack and hear about Jesus' death. But, what is important in this story, is what Jesus establishes.

► What does Jesus establish?

A new commandment.

► How is this commandment different than the Ten Commandments from the Old Testament? Are there changes in the language?

► The Ten Commandments given to Moses and the Israelites are specific commands; do this or don't do that. Each commandment concerns certain situations and areas of life, such as honor the Sabbath, don't lie, steal, cheat, or be envious. They're straightforward, simple, realistic, and practical. However, Jesus establishes a new

commandment today, one that is based on an action but is also rather vague: love one another.

► What does it mean to love another person? What are some ways you have been shown love? What are some ways you have shown love?

► Think back to the Gospel. What is Jesus about to do?

Die. Jesus' death is the most powerful, passionate, and personal expression of love the world has ever known. He died on the Cross to forgive sins that he is not responsible for. This is the example of love the Apostles are being given; they must love others by sacrificing for the other, even to the point of death brought upon themselves.

Wherever the Apostles go, and whatever they do, the Lord is empowering them to be witnesses to the new commandment he established the night before he was to suffer. And, it is precisely because of this love, that the Apostles know what they believe and to whom they belong. They are followers of Jesus, who gave love and proclaimed love by his actions, not just his words.

Love is what gives glory to God and love is how the Church is established and grows. This love is given freely, received with open hearts, and is unafraid to hurt and sacrifice for another.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 196.

At the Last Supper, Jesus establishes a cyclical quality to his love. He has received the love of the Father, and through that love he will sacrifice for the world, giving the ultimate expression and sign of perfect love for all who set eyes upon the Cross.

What can we do to love others in the same way Christ has loved us? This seems to be an almost impossible task. It's not as if we are being told to go die on a cross. Or, are we? What sacrifices can we make, what crosses can we carry, that allow us to imitate and emulate the Lord's great gift to us?

The new commandment given at the Last Supper, moments after Jesus has washed the Apostles feet and just hours before he will be nailed upon the Cross and suffer, is meant to be the foundation of our faith. We are called to actively love—to make daily sacrifices for those we care about and even those we don't know—so that we can be witnesses and known as disciples of Jesus.

Act on the Word

You will need poster board, a pack of markers, and Bibles.

Teens should form groups of about four or five (a little larger is okay if necessary). Give each group a sheet of poster board and a pack of markers. Ask teens to draw an image indicative of their image of love. However, they cannot draw a cross because that is too easy and obvious. Encourage teens to be creative and to think outside the box. They will need to discuss their views on love with each other in order to come up with an image that reflects their group's discussion. Once each group has drawn their image of love, teens should trade posters with another group. Ask them to look through the Bible (be sure every teen has a Bible) and come up with a Scripture passage that encapsulates or captures the image of love drawn on the poster board. After every group has found a passage to match that image, have them swap posters with another group. Teens should then come up with as many love songs as they can think of (Christian or secular) that help capture the spirit of the passage and image. After they are finished, teens should swap posters with another group. The groups should then choose one song that is on the list. Teens should whistle the song tune and the others will try to guess the name of the song and the artist.

Closing Prayer

*God of love,
you gave yourself completely to us by
becoming human.
As a human, you taught us to give of ourselves
completely to you
by loving one another.
Heal our unhealthy and hurtful experiences of love.
Make us aware of the love made visible
by your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.