

Fifth Sunday of Easter Year

Introduction/ Summary: by Glenn CJ Byer, MA SLD

These past several weeks of readings from the Book of Revelation make clear that the Easter mystery is the beginning of the end, the beginning of God's kingdom breaking into our world. The success of the apostles in bringing people to faith in Jesus is simply a sign of the arrival of that new heaven and new earth. The hardships endured by believers are the labor pains of this new creation. What the Gospel this week reveals, however, is the new commandment, the only commandment of the kingdom that is coming, the commandment of love.

In the world as we know it, a commandment to love is an impossible thing to enforce. How can you require someone to love someone else? How can you force someone to love another person? It is only in response to the offer of love from the Father in Christ that this can make sense. In order to be part of the new heaven and the new earth, to be in the kingdom of God, love of neighbor is the absolute requirement. And so, for those who love God, we obey, as best we can, the commandment to love.

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First Reading Acts 14:21-27

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

After Paul and Barnabas had proclaimed the good news to that city and made a considerable number of disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch. They strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith, saying, "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the reign of God." They appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith. Then they traveled through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia. After proclaiming the word at Perga they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now accomplished. And when they arrived, they called the church together and reported what God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

The word of God

Commentary: Acts 14:21-27 John Paul-Hiel, O.P.

Main Theme: We must PERSEVERE through hardships to enter the Kingdom of God.

On their missionary journey Paul and Barnabas "strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith." This is a message that we and all Christians need to heed as central to our faith. The keynote of it is that "it is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." This recalls, first of all, the message that it was "necessary," that is, a necessity within God's saving plan, that Jesus undergo suffering and death before being raised from the dead and bringing about the kingdom of God. Secondly, it recalls the teaching of Jesus that anyone who would come after him "must" of necessity in accord with God's plan take up the cross and follow him, must lose his or her life in order to save it.

And thirdly, Paul himself exemplified this message. Just before this reading Paul was in Lystra where "they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead" (14:19). Then, after being apparently dead in imitation of Jesus, when the disciples gathered around him he "arose" in imitation of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and entered the city (14:20). This is part of what "God had done with them" as they reported in Antioch. We are to imitate Jesus and Paul in relying upon God to strengthen us to persevere through the hardships we "must" undergo to enter God's kingdom.

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

✠ I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

Or:

✠ Alleluia.

The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and of great kindness.
The LORD is good to all
and compassionate toward all his works.

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD,
and let your faithful ones bless you.
Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might.

Let them make known your might to the children of Adam,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

Your kingdom is a kingdom for all ages,
and your dominion endures through all generations.

Second Reading Revelation 21:1-5a

A reading from the Book of Revelation

Then I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth.
The former heaven and the former earth had passed away,
and the sea was no more.
I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
"Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race.
God will dwell with them and they will be his people
and God will always be with them as their God.
God will wipe every tear from their eyes,
and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain,
for the old order has passed away."

The One who sat on the throne said,
"Behold, I make all things new."

The word of God

Commentary: Psalm 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13 by Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB

Psalm 145 is an individual hymn of praise which extols the greatness and the goodness of God. The climax of this hymn is found in verses 8-9 where the psalmist concretely describes some of characteristics which constitute God's greatness and goodness. The Lord is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, good to all, compassionate over all he has made. These characteristics reflect God's own self revelation to Moses in the famous passage of Ex 34:6-7. This is as close to a defining character of God as can be found in the Jewish scriptures. It is ever present throughout the books of these scriptures and it was taken over by Christians as they strove to understand the deeper identity of Jesus.

The characteristics of the Lord are revealed in the works of the Lord (Ps 145:10-13). These works manifest a kingdom unlike anything that humans have experienced on earth. Not only is it a kingdom filled with glory and splendor, but more importantly it is a kingdom that will endure forever. The reason this kingdom will be everlasting stems directly from the identity of the king. Unlike any other king, this king is the Lord God. All his words manifest faithfulness and all his deeds demonstrate graciousness. Everything in this kingdom focuses on

these wonderful characteristics of the king. These wonderful works of the Lord are themselves a form of thanksgiving and praise which all the people are encouraged to not only accept but also to imitate. Therefore we extol and we bless our God and our King.

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The word of God

Revelation 21:1-5a Commentary: By Deacon Owen Cummings

The Liturgy of the Word during the Easter Season is like a very richly woven tapestry, with many different but complementary shades and threads of meaning. Central to them all, however, is this fundamental conviction: the risen Jesus is one with the Church, which is his Body, and this ecclesial Body anticipates the final completion of everything in Christ at the Parousia, the end of time. When we hear the opening words, "I, John, saw new heavens and a new earth," we should be reminded of the opening words from the passage of Revelation we heard on the second Sunday of Easter: "I, John... was caught up in ecstasy on the Lord's Day." By extension this is still the Lord's Day, the day of the Eucharist, and his ecstasy has reached its final vision. The new creation that first emerged in the resurrection of the Lord is now complete. Thus, there is a "new heavens and a new earth" and "the sea was no longer." The sea is the potent symbol of chaos, like the chaotic waters of Genesis prior to the work of God's Spirit, as we heard in

the first reading of the Easter Vigil. Now the sea is gone, God's new creation is fully present --- "This is God's dwelling among men." The Eucharist, on the Lord's Day, anticipates the new creation of the end time. Our resurrection, in the Lord, has already begun.

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Gospel Acclamation John 13:34

✠ Alleluia, alleluia.

I give you a new commandment, says the Lord:
love one another as I have loved you.

✠ Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel John 13:31-33a, 34-35

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

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."

The Gospel of the Lord

Commentary: John 13:31-33a, 34-35 by Fr. Damien Dougherty, O.F.M.

Jesus consumes the banquet within the context of the history and liturgy of Judaism and, towards the end of the meal, he takes a portion of food, dips it in the gravy and hands it to Judas. Within the customs of the time, this gesture was an act of esteem from the head of the table to honor the friend or illustrious guest who had been invited to the meal. On Jesus' part the offer of the morsel is a gift of love to Judas to confirm the choice the Master had made by calling him to the apostolate along with the other disciples. Rather than perceiving its profound significance, Judas takes the immediate opportunity to accomplish the betrayal he has already begun

John, who is always attentive to details and their meaning, sees something

deeper in the time when Judas chose to leave the upper room. In contrast to the darkness of the obscure night of treachery and sin, "the true light which enlightens everyone" (John 1, 9) manifests the infinite love of God and reveals his own glory as the Word made flesh.

This very juncture that appears so gloomy is, yet, extremely positive in Jesus' life as it is the eminent moment of revelation because it is precisely through the suffering, passion and humiliation of the Christ that God will manifest his infinite love for humankind. Furthermore, within the journey towards this "hour," Jesus manifests his divinity and, at the same time, God will be glorified by Jesus.

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