

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

The Fifth Sunday of Easter—Year C

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“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Fifth Sunday of Easter – Year C

Reading I

Acts 14:21-27

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 kingdom 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.

Responsorial Psalm

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

R (cf. 1) I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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

Reading II

Revelation 21:1-5a

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.
He will dwell with them and they will be his people
and God himself will always be with them as their God.
He 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.”

Alleluia

John 13:34

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

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

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Gospel

John 13:31-33a, 34-35

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.

Exegesis

Acts 14:21-27

Our pericope last Sunday from *Acts* recorded the journey of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch in Pisidia. The journey began in Antioch of Syria, and they now return to that same place. Their return marks the end of the first missionary journey of Paul. Scholars date this sojourn from AD 46 to 49.

The journey was a story of successes and failures. Most recently in Lystra Paul invited a man who was crippled from birth to stand and walk. He was cured. The people in great joy believed that in Barnabas and Paul the gods Zeus and Hermes was revisiting them. They were proposing to offer sacrifices to them. Paul vehemently rebuked them: “Men, why are you doing this? We are also men, of like nature with you, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.” (Acts 14: 15). Paul was able to convince the people that they were merely human beings and that it was Christ who was working in and through them. However, some of the religious leaders decided to remove Paul and Barnabas. “But Jews came from Antioch (of Pisidia) and Iconium and having persuade the people they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city; and on the next day he went with Barnabas to Derbe. When they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium and to Antioch.” (Acts 14: 19-21).

Our passage begins with their entry into Antioch. They first strengthened the spirits of the disciples there and encouraged them to persevere in faith. Paul and Barnabas exemplified perseverance through their experiences over the last three years. Jesus taught His disciples that hardship and persecution would be a part of the lives of those who lived and proclaimed the gospel. Jesus even encouraged them to rejoice in persecution: “Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Mt 5:10). Paul testifies to this again in *Romans*: “The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.” (Rom 8: 17).

Paul then appointed elders to lead the community. The Greek word translated as *appointed* is *cheirotoneo*. It means literally *to stretch forth hands*. It is translated into English *appointed, chosen, installed*. Paul uses the image of laying on of hands to describe the ordination of priests: “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was conferred on you through the prophetic word with the imposition of hands of the presbyterate.” (1 Tim 4: 14).

After this they gathered the Church together and encouraged them by revealing all that God had done with them, especially how God had opened the door to the Gentiles. This had to be very encouraging for all of them.

Exegesis (Continued)

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

Psalm 145 consists of sixteen verses. It is titled *The Greatness and Goodness of God*.

The opening verse of our pericope, verse eight, echoes the words of Yahweh on Mount Sinai, as He presented to Moses the new, the second set of, stone tablets: “Having come down in a cloud, the Lord stood with him there and proclaimed his name, ‘Lord.’ Thus, the Lord passed before him and cried out, ‘The Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity, continuing His kindness for a thousand generations, and forgiving wickedness and crime and sin.’” (Ex 34: 5-7).

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. The Hebrew word that is translated here as *compassionate* and in Exodus as *kindness and fidelity* is *hesed*. *Hesed* is a word that Moses attested as spoken by God Himself. God is revealing Himself to us as steadfast unchanging love. *Hesed* has many translations, and it supports every description, i.e., steadfast love, faithfulness, fidelity, kindness, goodness, compassion, loyalty, joint obligation or covenant, favor, and rock as in solid and immutable. One word says it all. This is who God is!

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD, and let your faithful ones bless you. The *hesed* love that is showered upon us from God, who is love, elicits a response from creation. That response is love and gratitude. Gratitude is a dimension of love. *Works* include the entirety of God’s creation, all that is, all that has being. The Hebrew word for *thanks* is *yadah*. It means to be moved with gratitude, such that it cannot be contained within, but must become an open expression of praise, and acknowledgment of our creator. It is ultimately an expression of love, both an internal and an external manifestation of love.

Let them make known your might to the children of Adam, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. The response to the *hesed* love of God continues in this verse. The response of gratitude, *yadah*, is one that cannot be hidden, it calls for an external expression. It cannot be contained within us but must burst out into creation. In fact, the word translated here as *known*, or *make known* is *yada*, a root of the word *yadah*. We, the faithful, are called to proclaim, to make known, the *hesed* love of God! The best way to make it known is in the outward expression of gratitude and love.

Exegesis (Continued)

Revelation 21:1-5a

Our pericope describes the seventh vision in the final series of visions of John. The vision is focused on the promise of salvation fulfilled. It is the promise of God through the Prophet Isaiah fulfilled: “Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind. Instead, there shall always be rejoicing and happiness in what I create; for I create Jerusalem to be a joy and its people to be a delight; I shall rejoice in Jerusalem and exult in My people. No longer shall the sound of weeping be there, or the sound of crying.” (Is 65: 17-19).

St. Peter describes a similar vision of salvation: “Since everything is to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be, conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion, waiting for and hastening the coming day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved in flames and elements melted by fire. But according to His promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” (2 Pt 3: 11-13).

The sea was no more. The sea is symbolic of chaos, death, darkness and evil. “Then I saw a beast come out of the sea with ten horns and seven heads.” (Rev 13: 1). The elimination of the sea is a sign of God’s total victory over death and the powers of Satan. It represents the victory of God and His creation over the primordial chaos that existed since creation.

Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. There are many references in Sacred Scripture of God who desires to espouse us. (See Hos 2:16, 19; Isa 54:6; Ezek 16; Tob 13:16; 2 Cor 11:12; Eph 5:25). The image of the adorned bride is also a recurring image. “As I live says the Lord, you shall be arrayed with them all as with adornments, like a bride you shall fasten them on you.” (Is 49: 18). “I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul; for He has clothed me with a robe of salvation, and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with her jewels.” (Is 61: 10).

“Behold, God’s dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them as their God. This promise of God is also common in Sacred Scripture beginning in *Leviticus*: “I will be your God, and you will be my people.” (Lev 26: 12). This promise of God is repeated through the prophets Zechariah and Ezekiel: “They shall be My people, and I will be their God, with faithfulness and justice.” (Zech 8: 8). “My dwelling shall be with them; I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” (Ez 37: 27). In the aforementioned passages the Hebrew word that is translated *people* is *am*. It describes a particular people as in family or kin, originally the word described a paternal uncle or paternal relative. The word *an* is singular. It is translated into Greek as *loas*. *Loas* is also singular. The notable difference in the translation from these OT passages to our pericope from *Revelation* is that the word used is *laoi* which is plural. It speaks of peoples or nations. So, the promise of salvation now envisioned in the new heaven and the new earth, is all inclusive!

The One who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” Again, this verse fulfills the promise of God through the Prophet Isaiah: “See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (Is 43:19). St. Paul also talks of this new creation: “So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold new things have come.” Note that the promise of God is the transformation of what already exists. All that God created is good, but in need of salvation, healing and restoration.

Exegesis (Continued)

John 13:31-33a, 34-35

This weekend's Gospel is taken from the Last Supper Discourse of John's Gospel. Jesus has just gotten up from the table and washed the feet of His disciples. When finished He said: "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." (Jn 13: 15).

Jesus then speaks openly about the betrayal of Judas that is about to happen. Jesus reveals the betrayer by giving him the morsel. The gift of the morsel is a gesture of love, and the response of Judas is love rejected. Upon receiving the morsel Satan entered Judas and the final battle begins. "So, after he (Judas) received the morsel, he immediately went out; and it was night." (Jn 13: 30). Recall that night and darkness symbolize all that opposes the Light of the World. It is a symbol of evil and death, ignorance and unbelief, sin and destruction. It is an absence of light, love and life, peace and joy. With a little help from Satan, Judas walks out into that darkness.

Once introduced, the entire Gospel passage today is a direct quote from Jesus at the Last Supper. These are important parting words of our Lord.

When Judas had left them, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. It is precisely in a through the conquering of this darkness that the glory of God will be made manifest. Now the hour has come. The actions of Judas will begin a chain of events that will usher in the glory of God.

The Greek word translated as *glorified* is *doxazo*. The word for *glory* is *doxa*. The word is also translated as follows: *honor, praise, splendor, exalt, magnify* and *triumph*. The glory of God is the manifestation of God's *hesed* love on the Cross. This is the ultimate example that Jesus is asking His disciples and us to follow. Gaze upon the Cross and repeat the words of Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you." Jesus calls us to radical self-giving love. In this total gift of self, we lose nothing and gain the whole world.

Immediately following our Gospel passage this Sunday Jesus reminds His disciples and us, "It was not you who chose Me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain." (Jn 15:16). Remember that these words come as they are sitting around the table at the Last Supper. Jesus had just instituted the Holy Eucharist. He talks about His indwelling presence. He had just washed the feet of His disciples. Jesus is about to walk out into the Garden of Gethsemane to face His Passion. Jesus said. "This is my commandment; love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:12-13)

Reflection

Our readings this weekend focus on discipleship. So, in my prayer this week I was moved to contemplate discipleship. I was reflecting on what it meant to be a disciple at the time of Jesus. During that era, it was perhaps the greatest honor that anyone could have; to be chosen by a great master to be his disciple. It was literally a life changing event to be called and chosen to be a disciple of a prominent rabbi or teacher. As the word itself implies, a disciple would become a dedicated student of the master. In fact, the disciple would, over time, adopt and assimilate the world view of the master.

Each one of us is being chosen and called by the Master to be His disciple. Do we really understand and appreciate what an amazing gift that is? This weekend's Gospel is taken from the Last Supper Discourse of John's Gospel. Immediately following our Gospel passage this Sunday Jesus reminds his disciples and us, "It was not you who chose Me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain." (Jn 15:16). Remember that these words come as they are sitting around the table at the Last Supper. Jesus had just instituted the Holy Eucharist. He talks about His indwelling presence. He had just washed the feet of His disciples. Jesus is about to walk out into the Garden of Gethsemane to face His Passion. Jesus said, "This is my commandment; love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:12-13)

God is love. Jesus is the personification of that love. He is the source of that love. On the Cross the source of divine love and the perfect human response to that love meet in the person of Jesus. The world view of Jesus is culminated in the Cross. The definition of love begins on the Cross. The world view of Jesus is self-giving love. Each one of us is therefore called to assimilate a world view of self-giving love.

God is love and we were created in His image and likeness. The very purpose for which we were created is for love. We were created out of love and for love. God's love is personified and perfected in us. As disciples we are chosen and called to become self-giving love. Nothing short of that will ultimately give us meaning and purpose in life. We must lose ourselves in love to find our true selves.

One of my favorite theologians, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, once said, "If humanity would ever discover the power of love, man would for the second time discover fire." Remember the words of Jesus, "I came to set a fire on earth and how I wish that it were already blazing!" (Lk 12:49) So I pray, come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of us your faithful and enkindle within us the fire of Your love. Let the fire fall!

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Fr. Glenn".

Personal Witness

I was blessed as a child to be immersed in a very devout Catholic family. When I say that I am talking about parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, etc. Our family of six children took up an entire pew in church, but then there were grandparents and several pews of aunts and uncles and cousins that took up several additional pews. There is a popular expression that states, "Faith is caught, not taught." I caught my faith as a child. I memorized the Baltimore Catechism, but I don't know how much I understood. Whereas my faith was passed on to me by the entirety of my extended family, my faith was caught from my grandfather. Being his first and favorite grandson we were particularly close. Seeing his faith in his face and in his words and in his actions was contagious. His reverence and piety at the celebration of Holy Mass left me with little doubt as to the real and substantial presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

He and grandma owned a small country general merchandise store. For many years grandpa drove the school bus for the rural grammar school that we attended. After the morning run, he would serve the 8 a.m. daily Mass at the Catholic Church about a block from the school. Then he would work at the store until the after-school bus route.

On Saturday mornings during the school year, I would attend catechism class at school. It was taught by a group of devout sisters from a neighboring town. I recall memorizing the Baltimore Catechism. My book was filled with stars signifying my accomplishments. I was able to memorize well, but I understood very little. Nonetheless, I learned that God loved me and that He made me to love and serve Him in this life and be with Him forever in the next. Intellectually I understood that much. When I received my First Communion, I had no doubt that it was Jesus that I was receiving.

After catechism class I would walk over to my grandparent's store about two blocks down the road. My job was to help stock the shelves. As I was doing that, grandpa was filling boxes with groceries to be delivered. He would fill the back seat and the trunk of his big Buick and then we would be off delivering groceries. We traveled on rough backroads in a rural area. On more than one occasion we got the Buick stuck on the muddy roads. Some of the homes that we visited were old trailers and dilapidated old houses. I found out later in life, after grandpa had passed away, that often he did not charge for the groceries that he delivered. He would tell them that he would send them the bill but never did. My grandmother who was the bookkeeper had a difficult time balancing the books.

Grandpa died on Good Friday, 1975. At his wake and funeral, the following week, I was overwhelmed by people who came up to me and shared stories about how grandpa had helped them out. I heard stories of fathers who were temporarily unemployed for a variety of reasons, some who were suffering from injury or chronic illnesses, families who were just down and out and grandpa helped them through a dark and difficult time. At his funeral there were people standing in the isles of the church and in the vestibule. It was a testament to how many lives he had touched. I learned more about God from my grandpa than all those years of catechism class, Catholic high school, and 5 years of seminary training. He lived the gospel. For him the Eucharist was a verb. He lived the Eucharist with his life, he put on the heart and mind of Jesus, he put a towel around his waist and washed some feet. From him I caught my faith, and I am eternally grateful. Thanks gramps!

In Christ,

