

## 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Year C

### Acts 14:21-27

*This is the return leg of St. Paul's first missionary journey. Inspired by the Holy Spirit while in Syrian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas are sent to preach the Gospel to the peoples on the northeastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. They go as far west as Attalia and north as far as Pisidian Antioch which are both in present day Turkey.<sup>2</sup>*

**21**After Paul and Barnabas had proclaimed the good news to that city (Derbe) and made a considerable number of disciples, they returned to Lystra. These towns were about 60 miles apart.<sup>6</sup> and to Iconium. In Chapter 14:19 we are told of an attempt to attack and stone Paul and his companions who then fled this city. and to Antioch. Violent abuse was used in this city and the missionaries shook its dust from their feet when they left it in chapter 13.

**22**They strengthened the spirits of the disciples. This brings to mind the words of Jesus in Luke 22:32 "But I have prayed for you that your faith may never fail. You, in turn must strengthen your brothers." The return through the cities already evangelized is a pastoral visitation. The image of the apostles is of truly outstanding courage as they return to the places where they had been so badly treated.<sup>4</sup> and exhorted them to persevere in the faith. As the task for Paul and Barnabas is the stabilization of new communities in the face of opposition, exhorting the disciples to "persevere in the faith" means for them to remain loyal to their community commitment as well as their belief in the gospel.<sup>4</sup> saying, "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." The apostles have no difficulty in pointing to events to show the disciples that suffering and difficulties form part of Christian living. Bl. J. Escriva points out that "Each one of us has at some time or other experienced that serving Christ our Lord involves suffering and hardship; to deny this would imply that we had not yet found God. Far from discouraging us, the difficulties we meet have to spur us on to mature as Christians. This fight sanctifies us and gives effectiveness to our apostolic endeavors."<sup>5</sup> Paul and Barnabas believe hardships are part of the price of admission to the kingdom of God.<sup>7</sup>

**23**They Note that Paul and Barnabas ordained the elders. It was a hierarchical procedure, NOT a democratic one done by the lay assembly.<sup>3</sup> appointed elders. The Greek expression used here means "to stretch forth hands" and alludes to the rite of priestly ordination.<sup>3</sup> Here we see that at least as early as 17 years after the death of Jesus, it was considered an ordinary part of church life that each church have a priest.<sup>2</sup> These appointments assured continuity of doctrine and a firm foundation in the true teachings of Jesus as proclaimed by the apostles. for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith. This is evidence that the church was growing and that God's word was having its promised effect.<sup>1</sup>

**24**Then they traveled through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia.

**25**After proclaiming the word Preaching at Perga they went down to Attalia.

**26**From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now accomplished. This is where they were first commissioned or set apart for the work that they have now completed.<sup>3</sup> Their journey, which began around the year 45, has taken four years.<sup>5</sup>

**27**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. This phrase comes from the first gentile to embrace the faith-Cornelius-who paid homage as Peter entered his house.(Acts 10:25) to the Gentiles.

*Throughout this section of the Book of Acts, Paul and Barnabas are portrayed as loyal and active members of the local church in Antioch. They had been commissioned by it, and now they report back to it.<sup>4</sup>*

## Revelation 21:1-5a

*In the last chapter we read that the first creation has disappeared and the wicked have been driven off to punishment. Nothing remains but to wonder at the magnificence of the eternal Kingdom of God. The description of this new creation is the high point of the book. We can understand this selection on several levels for it not only refers to the end of time but the Revelation is also about the liturgy of the mass designed by God. For the early Christian writers, the Book of Revelation was incomprehensible apart from the liturgy.<sup>10</sup>*

**1**Then I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, Creation must be renewed or refashioned in order to befit redeemed humanity.<sup>6</sup> and the sea was no more. The sea, with its perilous storms may have given rise to the myths concerning monsters like Leviathan ruling over the primeval chaos. God will annihilate these monsters at the time of the new creation for brutal power and violence are incompatible with the peace of the world to come.<sup>6</sup> The disappearance of this symbol of chaos is assurance of God's total victory.<sup>8</sup>

**2**I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, On one level, this is the Church Triumphant. We can also consider that Jerusalem was a temple with a city built around it and it brought together all the strains of sacrifice that had gone before. Built on the site where Melchizedek had offered bread and wine, and where Abraham had offered his son, and where God had sworn His oath to save all nations, the Temple served as the enduring place of offerings, principal of which was identical with that most ancient sacrifice of Abel: the lamb. These Old Covenant sacrifices make sense as preparation for the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our royal High Priest. Now consider the sacrifice of the mass, which is offered by Christ who is represented by the priest before the assembly of the faithful.<sup>10</sup> coming down out of heaven from God, We labor in vain if we hope to build the City of God ourselves for it is God's gift and it is of divine origin.<sup>2</sup> God is the Architect and Builder of the city. It is "holy" because it is consecrated to God.<sup>6</sup> prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The image of God's people as both city and bride are traditional.<sup>8</sup>

**3**I heard a loud voice This is one of the four living creatures (angelic messengers) who gives an explanation of the new creation.<sup>6</sup> from the throne saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. This is the fulfillment of the prophecies that foretold the intimate union of God with the chosen people in the era of salvation. The intimacy that the first man enjoyed in Paradise and that Israel experienced in desert and Temple is now granted to all members of the People of God forever.<sup>6</sup> He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them as their God. Remember that the MASS is the event that sealed God's covenant!<sup>10</sup>

**4**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." While our first reading from Acts seems to promise trials, here in our second reading we are promised relief from those trials.<sup>2</sup> The former world disappears, with all those repulsive characteristics that gave it the appearance of a creation enslaved to sin.<sup>6</sup> There are actually seven elements of the old order that will be no more: sea, death, mourning, wailing, pain, every accursed thing and night (the last two are mentioned in chapter 22).<sup>8</sup>

**5a**The One who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Note that God is not making new things but that he is making all things new. It is a matter of renovation.<sup>8</sup> God himself is speaking and he affirms that He—even now—is creating a new world. Although that new world will emerge in its complete form on the last day, the renewal of all things has already begun; it began with the life, death and resurrection of Christ. It is mysteriously present here on earth but when the Lord comes it will enter into its perfection. God himself, the Lord of history guarantees it!<sup>9</sup>

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

*This passage comes from Jesus' discourse during the Last Supper. With the departure of Judas we begin the long discourse that extends to the end of chapter 17. In it Jesus speaks to the disciples as one already glorified for the chain of events connected with his glorification has now begun.<sup>6</sup>*

**31**When Judas had left them, Jesus' death is the source of His glory and dominion, the cross is His throne. That is why Judas' leaving the cenacle to betray Jesus leads Him to say, "NOW is the Son of Man glorified."<sup>2</sup> **Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.** This is Jesus' preferred title for himself, which is used 82 times in the Gospels and only by Jesus.<sup>13</sup> This is a real thunderbolt! Jesus is announcing that he is the fulfillment of Dan 7:13-14 where he has a vision in which he saw four beasts representing worldly kingdoms which are all finally displaced by a heavenly ruler: "I saw One like a son of man coming on the clouds of heaven; when he reached the Ancient One and was presented before him, he received dominion, glory, and kingship; nations and peoples of every language serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed." Matthew, Mark and Luke report Jesus saying to the Sanhedrin at his trial, "Soon you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." This was considered a blasphemy and led to the call for Jesus' death.<sup>2</sup> It is precisely when Christ accepts his suffering at the hands of evil men that shows us the dimensions of God's love for the world.<sup>11</sup> His death is the beginning of his victory. By voluntarily accepting death out of love as a supreme act of obedience to the Will of God, Jesus performs the greatest sacrifice man can offer for the glorification of God. The Father will respond to this glorification, which Christ offers Him, by glorifying Christ as Son of man. Thus the glory, which the Son gives the Father, is at the same time glory for the Son.<sup>12</sup>

**32**If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and God will glorify him at once. The Father would be glorified by Christ's redemptive death and Christ would be glorified by the Father in his Resurrection and Ascension.<sup>14</sup>

**33a**"My children, This expression is highly favored in the fourth gospel. It is both a term of affection and an assertion of our dependence upon God.<sup>1</sup> **I will be with you only a little while longer.**

**34**I give you a new commandment: Only God can issue a Commandment. Charity is also the law of the OT but Christ's command is new in extending it to all men without distinction.<sup>6</sup> Also, the love which Jesus preaches is much more demanding and includes returning good for evil.<sup>12</sup> **love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.** Christ's love is not only the model but also the motive and cause of Christian charity.<sup>6</sup> This is his last will and testament.<sup>12</sup> As Fulton J. Sheen puts it, "He addressed His Apostles as a dying parent to His children and as a dying Lord to His servants."<sup>14</sup>

**35**This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Jesus makes charity THE distinguishing mark of his disciples. However, it is still a new commandment, for very few people have taken the trouble to practice it. The majority of men, both in the past and still today, have chosen to ignore it.<sup>12</sup>

*Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "Workbook FOR LECTORS AND GOSPEL READERS" by Aelred Rosser, (2) The Commentary Notes of Sean Innerst and Tim Gray, (3) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Acts of the Apostles," (4) "The Acts of the Apostles" by Luke Timothy Johnson, (5) "The Navarre Bible: Acts of the Apostles," (6) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (7) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2007" by James L. Weaver, (8) "Revelation" by Wilfrid J. Harrington, O.P., (9) "The Navarre Bible: Revelation", (10) "The Lamb's Supper: The Mass As Heaven On Earth" by Scott Hahn, (11) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of John," (12) "The Navarre Bible: St John", (13) "Dictionary of the Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S.J., and (14) "Life of Christ" by Fulton J. Sheen.*

*In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.*