

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

By Al Mansfield

Acts 14:21-27

Psalm 145

Revelation 21:1-5

John 13:31-35

OLD INTO NEW

Passover, pasch, passage, transition...the old order has passed away. We hear today of the early Christian community transitioning from a Jewish sect to a Gentile Church. The Book of Revelation describes the transition from the Church on earth in this "valley of tears" to a Church in glory, the bride of Christ. In the gospel Jesus gives a new commandment of love. The old has passed away, "Behold I make all things new."

ACTS

Our first reading describes the conclusion of the first journey of Paul and Barnabas. They were sent out as missionaries by the Church in Antioch of Syria. This journey (45-49 AD) took them to Cyprus, Perge, Antioch of Pisidia, and the cities of Lyconia.

Their message to the believers was an encouragement to persevere in the faith: "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." Paul actually suffered a violent stoning in Lystra.

Paul and Barnabas returned to their "home base," the Church in Antioch, and reported the marvels the Lord had done through them. The Responsorial, Psalm 145, is a fitting hymn of praise to the Lord for the spread of the gospel.

GOSPEL

In anticipation of the Lord's ascension, we read today from the Last Discourse of Jesus at the Last Supper in John's gospel.

Once Judas left the meal, events were set in motion toward the arrest, passion and death of Jesus, and his passage into glory. His last instructions to his apostles have to do with loving one another: "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another." This brotherly love should characterize Christian disciples.

REVELATION

The second readings during these Sundays after Easter are taken from the Book of Revelation. Today's selection is from the last chapter. John has a vision of a new heaven and a new earth. The holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, is the Church glorified, "as a bride adorned for her husband."

The next few verses are some of the most beautiful, inspiring, and consoling ones in all of Scripture. God will dwell with us. He will always be with us as our God. He will wipe away all tears and death; mourning, wailing and pain will cease...for the old has passed away and all is made new in Christ!

THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

Personally, speaking, I am not a big fan of change. In fact, I have been known to say, once or twice, "variety is overrated." So, I and others like me are challenged by change, even necessary change. Today's readings, however, describe change as part of God's plan. The old gives way to the new. Jesus is called "the new Man, the

new Adam." Let us fully embrace the definitive change that Jesus has made in creation and in our human existence. As we look ahead toward Pentecost, we can even now say, "Come Holy Spirit - change our hearts to be conformed to the image of the Son of God" (cf. Rom. 8:29).