

Sixth Sunday of Easter



Prayer to Go Forth and Bear Fruit

Ever-living God,
your Son Jesus laid down his life
for ours,
and called us not slaves, but friends.
Help us to honor his sacrifice
by going forth and bearing fruit
that endures,
that gladdens people's hearts,
and nourishes them
for right thinking and action.
Give us sure hope in the Resurrection.
We ask this through our Lord
Jesus Christ,
your Son, who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Sunday, May 13, 2012

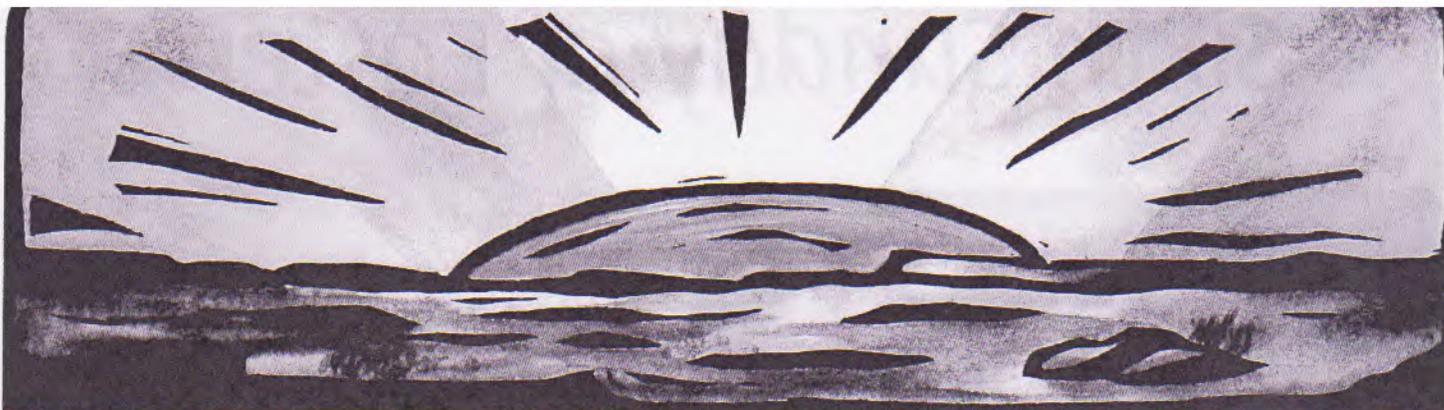
Joy and Friendship: The Final Commandment

Today's Readings: Acts 10:25–26, 34–35, 44–48; Psalm 98:1, 2–3, 3–4 (See 2b); 1 John 4:7–10; John 15:9–17. Today Jesus tells his friends his purpose in coming: “that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete” (15:11). Because Jesus set his eyes set on joyful loving, he endured the cross; the Passion wasn't redemptive simply because it was painful. Suffering and joy seem like strange companions, but Jesus promises we can both suffer and be joyous.

We may not think of ourselves as being God's delight, but that seems to be what Jesus says. We are more often filled with doubt or self-recrimination, and that must grieve the heart of God. Furthermore, Jesus calls those gathered for

his Last Supper not servants but friends (15:15), and we know from the beloved Lenten story of raising Lazarus what friendship with him means. It gives us the freedom to speak as plainly as Martha did (“there will be a stench!”). It motivates us to act not from fear as a slave might, but from eagerness to please a friend.

Indeed, Jesus does not ask for brilliance, daring exploits, or superhuman feats. Instead, he commands, “Abide in my love,” enjoying a restful peace and security. His commandment is not to jump through hoops, trying to please, but to love each other. Not that it's easy. Loving can be fraught with difficulty. But it bears eternal fruit.



This Week at Home

Monday, May 14

Feast of Saint Matthias

Today's Readings: Acts 1:15–17, 20–26; Psalm 113:1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8 (8); John 15:9–17. All we know about Matthias is found in today's reading from Acts: he is chosen by prayer and by lots to replace Judas, taking up the mission Jesus gave the apostles. We also are called to walk with the Lord Jesus and to witness to his Resurrection.

Tuesday, May 15

Saint Isidore (1070–1130)

Today's Readings: Acts 16:22–34; Psalm 138:1–2ab, 2cde–3, 7c–8 (7c); John 16:5–11. Born in Madrid, Saint Isidore, whose optional memorial we may celebrate today, was a simple peasant who lived an ordinary life, working for a large landowner. He was known for generosity to those poorer than himself. One of the few canonized saints who was married, Isidore and his wife Maria are patron saints of farmers. At meals today, give thanks for farmers who grow our food.

Wednesday, May 16

How Could We Ever Repay?

Today's Readings: Acts 17:15, 22–18:1; Psalm 148:1–2, 11–12, 13, 14 (Alleluia); John 16:12–15. During the tragic shooting in Tucson, Arizona, in January of 2011, some made heroic efforts to protect others, and died doing so. Imagine being a survivor whose spouse or friend died saving your life. You would want to live in a way that honored the person and the gift. Christ gave his life to save ours. The Spirit of truth in today's Gospel can show us how to make some small repayment in our lives.

Thursday, May 17

If Celebrating the Ascension Today

Today's Readings: Acts 1:1–11; Psalm 47:2–3, 6–7, 8–9 (6); Ephesians 1:17–23 or 4:1–13; Mark 16:15–20. Today's solemnity is not about Jesus' absence or about saying good bye, but

rather his continued presence among us. Ephesians 1:23 explains that Christ fills the universe, so we must learn to expect him at every turn. It's a great day for a picnic or procession, burning incense, and celebratory music.

If Celebrating the Ascension Next Sunday:

Today's Readings: Acts 18:1–8; Psalm 98:1, 2–3ab, 3cd–4 (Alleluia); John 16:16–20. Today's reading from Acts gives us a fascinating window on Paul's missionary work: the people he met, how he supported himself, his frustrations, and his successes with those who "came to believe." Coming to believe ever more deeply is a lifelong process. Where are you in that process this year?

Friday, May 18

Saint John I

Today's Readings: Acts 18:9–18; Psalm 47:2–3, 4–5, 6–7 (8a); John 16:20–23. Pope John, whose optional memorial we may celebrate today, served from 523 to 526. He walked a difficult line between his own orthodoxy and Theodoric, ruler of Italy, who embraced the Arian heresy. Theodoric sent him to Constantinople to persuade the Byzantine Emperor to soften his harsh treatment of Arians in that region. On his return John was imprisoned at Ravenna, where he died. Jesus' words in today's Gospel would have given comfort: "So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice" (16:22).

Saturday, May 19

Joy after Sorrow

Today's Readings: Acts 18:23–28; Psalm 47:2–3, 8–9, 10 (8a); John 16:23b–28. In today's Gospel, Jesus promises his disciples that joy will eventually eclipse suffering, just as the joy of a child coming into the world replaces the pain of childbirth. He says, "On that day you will ask nothing of me" (16:23). But in the meantime, we will need to ask for help, and he invites us to ask the Father in his name. "Ask and you will receive . . ." (24).



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 Keeping the Seasons
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