

Fifth Sunday of Easter



Bless Us on Our Journeys

O driving, forceful Holy Spirit,
you who sent Paul and Barnabas
on their travels,
helped them convert many people,
and endure many hardships,
inspire us to great deeds as well.
Give us courage on the frontiers
of our day,
as we long for security.
Fill us with the same grace.
Bless us on our own journeys.
We, too, long for a meaningful
livelihood
in the midst of unemployment.
We, too would serve you
as the first Christians did.
We, too need your encouragement.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Sunday, April 28, 2013

Life after Jesus

Today's Readings: Acts 14:21–27; Psalm 145:8–9, 10–11, 12–13 (see 1); Revelation 21:1–5a; John 13:31–33a, 34–35. Today's three readings form a lively conversation. The Gospel, from the Last Supper discourse, introduces a problem. Jesus says, "Little children, I am with you only a little longer" (13:33). Final words carry special strength. (Witness Randy Pausch's *The Last Lecture*, which became a popular book and video.) Jesus's listeners learn that in addition to himself, he gives them each other. Although he would not be physically with them, they could find his memory, his voice, his actions within the community of his friends.

The second reading, from Revelation, resonates with the Gospel, stoutly maintaining that God "will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples and God himself will

be with them" (21:3). The disciples at the Last Supper worried that Jesus was leaving them; what would the future hold? The words of the One answer that question: "See, I am making all things new." (21:5) They reassure us too, when we worry about change, try to protect our fragile security, or wonder what's next in God's plan.

The reading from Acts shows how words translate to activity. The journey of Paul and Barnabas was a whirlwind tour of the Mediterranean. Yet not a word bemoans the difficulties of travel at that time: weather, hunger, pirates, waiting on winds, insecurity. Instead, they reassure and encourage those they meet. Delighted that through them, God has invited the Gentiles into faith, they praise all that God had helped them achieve.



This Week at Home

Monday, April 29

St. Catherine of Siena

An outspoken fourteenth-century Italian, Catherine refused to tolerate Church schism, wars, clerical corruption, gossip, or persecution. She plunged into raging arguments, and even persuaded the pope to return from Avignon to Rome. Her life was brief (she died at 33), but in that time she wrote the *Dialogue* and became a doctor of the Church. St. Catherine also had a vision of hell—empty. Today's Readings: Acts 14:5–18; Psalm 115:1–2, 3–4, 15–16 (1ab); John 14:21–26.

Tuesday, April 30

St. Pius V

This day offers us much inspiration. In the Gospel, Jesus assures his friends of the gift of peace, offsetting trouble or fear. In Acts, Paul and Barnabas, despite stonings and beatings that leave them half-dead, strengthen and encourage the disciples. In the sixteenth century, Pope Pius V banned luxury from his household, sat beside the dying in hospitals, and prayed constantly. How will we who have inherited the faith of these people enact this heritage? Today's Readings: Acts 14:19–28; Psalm 145:10–11, 12–13ab, 21 (see 12); John 14:27–31a.

Wednesday, May 1

St. Joseph the Worker

Today's memorial reminds us that work—all work, even ordinary, humble chores—is holy. Today, appreciate your own work, and that of those who support us all: who bring food to our tables, provide medical care when we're ill, or remove trash. If we approach our work deliberately, grateful that we can do it, then it can become as prayerful as Joseph's was. Today's Readings: Genesis 1:26—2:3; Psalm 90:2, 3–4, 12–13, 14 and 16 (see 17b); Matthew 13:54–58.

Thursday, May 2

St. Athanasius

This early Christian saint of the Eastern Church was blessed with intelligence, which he displayed in debate and writing that still inspires seekers. In today's reading from Acts, we hear the Apostles and elders deciding that circumcision placed an unnecessary burden on Gentile converts. If God had made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, Peter reasoned, why should Christians create barriers? All will be saved "through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (15:11). Today's Readings: Acts 15:7–21; Psalm 96:1–2a, 2b–3, 10 (3); John 15:9–11.

Friday, May 3

Feast of Sts. Philip and James

In today's Gospel, Jesus chides Philip for his all-too-human slowness (14:9), and yet Philip's question spurs Jesus to provide the wonderfully eloquent teaching that we drink in today. In John 6:7, it is Philip, our stand-in, who provides the literal tally of available food that kicks off the Lord's miracle of loaves and fishes. Several people in the New Testament are named James, and 1 Corinthians 15 mentions a post-Resurrection appearance to James. Yet scholars debate the man's identity: son of Zebedee or son of Alpheus or brother of the Lord, Joseph or Jude? Rather than get a headache over it, let's be grateful that even those of dull mind and confused identity can become saints. Today's Readings: 1 Corinthians 15:1–8; Psalm 19:2–3, 4–5 (5); John 14:6–14.

Saturday, May 4

Travel and Transformation

The place names in today's reading from Acts map a geography of hope. Paul's zeal helped spread Christianity through the known world. What could've easily remained a small, middle-eastern sect came to extend around the globe, thanks to these early efforts. When we get discouraged about our mistakes, we can remember that Paul was once possessed by terrible hatred. Yet the same energy with which he once persecuted Christians became a grace-filled outpouring of Good News. Today's Readings: Acts 16:1–10; Psalm 100:1b–2, 3, 5 (2a); John 15:18–21.



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