

# Sixth Sunday of Easter



## Dona Nobis Pacem

Life-giving God,  
you who sent the Advocate  
Jesus promised to us,  
give us peace  
in this warring world.  
Teach us to solve our disagreements  
without weapons.  
Disarm our hearts and hands.

Give us spirits untroubled and unafraid.  
How desperately  
we need your gift of peace!  
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, forever and ever. Amen.

## Sunday May 5, 2013 The Spirit's Power to Resolve

Today's Readings: Acts 15:1–2, 22–29; Psalm 67:2–3, 5, 6, 8 (4); Revelation 21:10–14, 22–23; John 14:23–29. Jesus had promised his disciples in John 14 that the Paraclete, or Holy Spirit, would come and instruct them in everything. Surely the Spirit is with them when they make the decision described in today's reading from Acts. The decision marked a historic turning point for Christianity.

At the Council of Jerusalem it was decided that it was no longer necessary to be circumcised as a Jew in order to become a Christian. From now on, converts coming from outside of Judaism—Gentiles—could bypass that step and simply be baptized. The doors of the community opened to the world. *All* were welcome to enter with “no further burden than these essentials” (15:28). That phrase is repeated in

the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (# 473) and has resolved many disagreements: only essentials are required for newcomers.

The way the decision was made is noteworthy. It was not simply handed down by Peter. Instead, when dissension arose over how to incorporate Gentiles, representatives were chosen and sent to Antioch for a meeting. Despite the difficulty of assembling this many people before e-mail, texting, or telephones, the whole Jerusalem church agreed unanimously. What a fine model—discussing the problem openly and transparently with all sides well represented. Next time the parish faces an issue, this story in Acts can inspire a charitable and effective path toward resolution.



## This Week at Home

### Monday, May 6 A Long Tale

Today's reading from Acts has the immediacy of a traveler's journal—first describing the route taken to Philippi, and then zooming in on the conversion of Lydia. Paul and Barnabas encounter her “outside the city gate by the river.” She is a merchant of purple cloth, and “the Lord opened her heart to listen.” After her Baptism, she invites the missionaries to stay with her. These details show us the evangelists' methods, especially how they worked in partnership with the Lord. Today's Readings: Acts 16:11–15; Psalm 149:1b–2, 3–4, 5–6a and 9b (4a); John 15:26—16:4a.

### Tuesday, May 7 Interesting Questions

Today's remarkable story from Acts prompts reflection: why did Paul stay in jail even after his chains were broken? Was the physical restraint nothing compared to God's freedom? What constraints limit our freedom, compassion, or outreach? Are these internal or external? Can we move beyond them? Or, imagine yourself the jailer. In a brief time, he went from drawing his sword for suicide to washing wounds and being baptized. How would he explain this change to his family and friends? Today's Readings: Acts 16:22–34; Psalm 138:1–2ab, 2cde–3, 7c–8; John 16:5–11.

### Wednesday, May 8 A Stunning Heritage

“All that the Father has is mine,” (John 16:15) Jesus explains, and it will all be passed on to the disciples. The scene is the Last Supper, just before the Passion, and the disciples are hearing about the Holy Spirit for the first time. The Spirit will soon be guiding them, providing the intimate link between the Father, the Son, and his disciples. In our time, the Spirit continues to pass on all that the Father and Son want to impart. Today's Readings: Acts 17:15, 22—18:1; Psalm 148:1–2, 11–12, 13, 14 (Alleluia); John 16:12–15.

### Thursday, May 9 The Ascension of the Lord

To celebrate this solemnity, tell Easter stories of empowerment, compassion, joy, and transcendence. The stories may be rooted in everyday grit, but they reach toward heaven. For example: the secret Santas who, before Christmas 2011, pay off lay-away balances for families who can't afford the toys or gifts they wanted. Or a couple who, despite daunting medical odds, boldly conceive and carry a pregnancy to full term. Or a remarkable immigrant who secures higher education and brings medical care to an impoverished population. Today's Readings: Acts 1:1–11; Psalm 98:1, 2–3ab, 3cd–4 (see 2b); Ephesians 1:17–23; Luke 24:46–53.

### Friday, May 10 St. Damien de Veuster

One of the worst diseases westerners introduced to the Hawaiian Islands was leprosy (Hansen's Disease). Because health authorities couldn't control its spread, they sent lepers to the remote island of Molokai. One man must have believed Jesus's promise, “your pain will turn into joy” (John 16 :20). Damien, a Belgian priest, *volunteered* for duty there. His work transformed a hellhole into a happy, busy community. Today's Readings: Acts 18:9–18; Psalm 47:2–3, 4–5, 6–7 (8a); John 16:20–23.

### Saturday, May 11 The Work of Trust

North Americans pride themselves on independence, but also need to learn the truth of today's Gospel. “Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete” (John 16:24). All of us experience difficulties that are beyond our control—relationships, health issues, job loss, or economic pressure. Can we admit our dependence, turning troubles over to God, and trust him to give what we most need? Why is it sometimes so hard to ask? Today's Readings: Acts 18:23–28; Psalm 47:2–3, 8–9, 10 (8a); John 16:23b–28.



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 Keeping the Seasons  
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