

**Anybody can love, but not everybody makes good decisions about love. Christians learn that the decision to have sex outside of marriage is a bad decision. But it is a hard teaching for many Christians and non-Christians to hear. Jesus taught something even harder: The greatest love is laying down your life for your friend. But our society teaches that the greatest love is loving yourself as much as you can.**

**Not everyone agrees about love, sex, life, death, serving others and serving yourself. You will hear many teachings about the right time to have sex, to start college, to work full time, to welcome immigrants into this country, or to go to war with another country. Some of these teachings are upsetting, even though they come from authorities. You graduates have spent your high school years at a time when our country has waged war. Not everyone agrees that the decision to go to war was a good idea. We were taught that it was, but now many people aren't so sure. During your high school years you may have started a relationship with another person because you thought it was a good idea, but later you weren't so sure. The decision to love is a difficult decision. So is the decision to hate. So is the decision to belong.**

**In today's first reading the apostles faced a decision about belonging. When they started preaching about Jesus, they expected that converts would come from the Jews, but many Gentiles came to believe. Some disciples were teaching erroneously that Gentiles had to become Jews before they could become Christians. The apostles said, "We have heard that some of our number who went out without any mandate from us have upset you with their teachings and disturbed your peace of mind." They said you don't have to become Jews first. You can just be Christians.**

**This was not the last time that someone in authority taught something that upset people or disturbed their peace of mind. Throughout a student's high school years, parents and teachers practically make it a career to teach things that upset teens and disturb their peace of mind. Brace yourselves: It continues throughout college. Assumptions you hold dearly get shaken time and again – assumptions about life and love, war and hate. When you hear different teachings, it is hard to make the right decisions.**

**When the apostles made their announcement about Gentile converts, they used a dramatic phrase, "It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us." They reached their decision after consultation with one another, after praying together, and in faith that what they were saying was what the Holy Spirit had decided for them.**

**Whatever stage of life we are at – ending high school, mid-career as a teacher, empty nesting as a parent – we all face difficult decisions time and time again. Whether you are the president of the United States, the pastor of a parish, a parent or a graduate, we can always benefit from good decisions made after consultation and prayer, from decisions about which we can confidently say, "It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us."**