

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 15, 1994

Acts 1:15-17, 20-26

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, "Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus—for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry."

"For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'Let his homestead become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it'; and 'Let another take his position of overseer.' So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection." So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

1 John 4:11-16

Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

John 17:11-19

Jesus looked us to heaven and prayed: "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We are to be in the world but not of the world. What does this mean and how do you experience this tension in your own life?
2. Have you ever been "hated" or discriminated against because of a belief you hold? What were the circumstances and how did you handle it?
3. In this week's Gospel Jesus prays for those he loves. What does he ask of God for us? What do you ask of God for those you love?
4. An old pastor asks, "If you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" What do today's readings tell us the nature of the evidence must be? Would you be found innocent or guilty? Why?

Tom & Paula Kaempffer □

Jesus prays when he's in a jam

THE GOOD NEWS

GOD'S WORD IN
EVERYDAY LIVING



By Father Paul Turner

IN A JAM, WE PRAY. No matter how strongly parents, catechists, and clergy tell us to pray regularly, not just to ask for things but to praise God, to keep an attitude of thankfulness at all times -- we most spontaneously, happily and faithfully pray when we're in a jam.

Jesus is more human than you might realize. His longest prayer recorded in the Bible comes on the night before he died -- in his biggest jam. Next Sunday's gospel is one excerpt.

John has painted an image of Jesus as God's messenger. Those who see Jesus see the Father. At the end of the Last Supper, Jesus turns in a report, so to speak, of his mission. He tells the Father what he's done, and how to finish what's left.

We hear this passage during the Easter season because it reflects on life. Here Jesus describes the great Easter theme of new life, its nature and its perils. The life Jesus offers will be marked by unity. It will be enriched with truth. It will be distinguished from the world's false hopes which threaten it.

THIS MESSAGE becomes intense for Jesus because he's turning over the mission to the disciples. Not just his mission -- his identity. Those who see Jesus see the Father; now those who see the disciples will see Jesus. As the Father sent Jesus, so he sends his followers. He loves them as he loves himself, for they are now the body of Christ, the image of God for the world.

The problem is, the world hates them. They are in the world, but not of it. And the principles of life which the world embraces run counter to the unity and truth which give the life of Christ. The very world they are asked to serve will reject them. It's a fate known well by tax auditors and telemarketers, a club few people yearn to join.

The hate-filled world is still with us. You can see it in individuals who have lost hope and resort to criticism, or in those who scuffle with suicide, rape and murder. You can hear it on radio talk shows and watch it on network TV. Many people prefer to

complain about problems rather than work with understanding toward their solutions. The disease permeates Congress, families, parishes, presbyterates, and dioceses. Lunch breaks at work find people harping on what's wrong with the company. We're all part of it -- we feed ourselves a diet of venom, criticism, and disunity.

Jesus' greatest prayer was that disunity not hurt the work of his Church. His fear was well-founded. For 2,000 years we have fought and bickered over everything from adjectives to furniture.

No one would want the job of carrying out Jesus' work after his death, yet Jesus does not ask the Father to make the work go away. He asks the Father to help the Church do it.

Jesus knew well the hostility of the world. He wanted his followers to contrast that hostility with unity. Jesus feared the sickness of disunity, but he promised the remedy of truth. The coming of the Holy Spirit would help the disciples to know the truth, to rejoice in it, and to find God in their unity.

For Jesus, the model of unity was his relationship with the Father. He prayed for that kind of unity in the Church. He knew that unity, not disunity, would bring joy. The world which wallows in complaint would never be happy. So much did Jesus crave this unity for us, so much did he love us, that he accepted death to reveal for us the secret of joy. In dying, he celebrated his unity with the Father, and modeled the oneness which love can bring.

This last Sunday before Pentecost shows us how desperately the world needs the coming of the Holy Spirit. In his final prayer, his final report to the Father, Jesus has given a job description of what the Holy Spirit should do: reveal truth, build unity, protect from discord and give life. The world, sick with discontent, agonizingly awaits its joy. In the Gospel, in the gift of the Spirit, that joy will be revealed.

IF WE REFLECTED on the jam the world is in, perhaps we'd pray more regularly. This would itself answer Jesus' prayer. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to pray, so in our very act of prayer the Spirit accomplishes its mission -- bringing life to a world racked with anger.

As followers of Christ, we become his messengers, the ones who complete his mission for the world today. Where we see disunity, Christ calls us to be agents of union, providing not another avenue for complaint, but highways of understanding, giving direction for life.

Father Paul Turner is pastor of St. John Francis Regis Parish, Kansas City. □

Daily Scripture Readings

Sixth Sunday of Easter Sunday, May 8

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35,
44-48
Psalms 98:1-4
7 John 4:7-10
John 15:9-17

Monday, May 9

Acts 16:11-15
Psalms 145:1-6, 9
John 15:26-16:4

Tuesday, May 10

Acts 16:22-34
Psalms 138:1-3, 7-8
John 16:5-11

Wednesday, May 11

Acts 17:15, 22-18:1
Psalms 148:1-2, 11-14
John 16:12-15

Ascension Thursday

Thursday, May 12

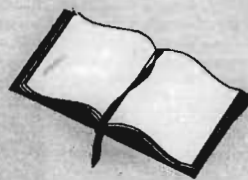
Acts 1:1-11
Psalms 47:2-3, 6-9
Ephesians 1:17-23
Mark 16:15-20

Friday, May 13

Acts 18:9-18
Psalms 47:2-7
John 16:20-23

Saturday, May 14

Acts 1:15-17, 20-26
Psalms 113:1-8
John 15:9-17



Seventh Sunday of Easter

Sunday, May 15

Acts 1:15-17, 20-26
Psalms 103:1-2, 11-12,
19-20
1 John 4:11-16
John 17:11-19