

## **Fifth Sunday of Easter C2025**

The readings of this Sunday invite us to meditate on the work Our Lord Jesus started with the foundation of the early Church, how it has been continued over the years by the apostles, and what implication it has for our Church today.

The acts of the Apostles describe the missionary work of St Paul and Barnabas in the gentile lands. It shows the spirit that animated them as they were strengthening the disciples to persevere in faith and to accept hardships for the sake of God's Kingdom. As they were proclaiming the Gospel throughout the lands, they appointed elders in each community through prayers and fasting, commending them to the Lord in whom they put their faith.

What that motivated Paul and Barnabas was above all the salvation of the world in continuity with the work initiated by our Lord Jesus himself. For that reason they felt compelled to give a report to the whole Church of what they were doing and how the Lord was saving people through their hands.

What this text teaches us is the necessity of having people who can consecrate their time and talents to the work of our Lord Jesus. Today, more than ever, we need people in various ministries, catechists, deacons, religious men and women, Eucharistic ministers, priests..., who can bring the word of the Lord to their brothers and sisters. The text teaches us also the importance of working together as one family and the people of God.

It means for us is that we have to come to a clear vision that the evangelization is the work of the Church as a group and not of isolated individuals as gifted as they might be. Paul and Barnabas called the Church together and reported on their mission. By doing so, they also listened to the insights of the remaining of the Church with regard to their work. Without that spirit of reporting and listening, the work of the Lord runs the risk of being jeopardized by some individuals, while everybody else is left out of the picture.

The big principle at the heart of the Church and guides the action of those dedicated to the work of evangelization is the law of love. As the Gospel relates, our Lord recommends us to love one another as he has loved us. Love is the mark of our identity and our vestment as Christians. Where hatred is in the heart and on the lips, there is a serious problem of belonging to the Kingdom of our Lord.

Love commands acceptance of the other, tolerance of the one who is not like me, the respect of the one who, though not sharing my vision of things or ideology, is still a brother or a sister in Christ. If we are not wearing love as a habit, we are out of the Kingdom. That is why our Lord Jesus says that we will be recognized by others as his disciples, if we love one another.

This point is very critical and challenging. By experience we know that we often love those who love us and we reject those who are not close to us or are not like us. But our Lord is inviting us to love without any distinction of race, color of skin, language or nationality. We have to love one another beyond mere sympathy and feelings; motivated only by the example of our Lord himself.

Such a love bears the mark of witness to the world that we belong to our Lord. The world, indeed, is hungry for people who can witness to the love of our Lord, beyond the sentiments and the feelings. The world is hungry for Christians who can show to them the civilization of love.

When we love as our Lord loved us, God is glorified in us. When we imitate our Lord by keeping the new commandment of love, we identify ourselves with him, and the Father will glorify us with our Lord. That type of love our Lord is asking of us requires new attitudes, new values and new standards of relating to God and to others in the way that we transform everything we touch. That type of love is more than just a warm feeling toward others. It is a compassionate gift of ourselves to the spiritual and bodily needs of our fellows. It implies a reaching out to others in a caring attitude for their well-being without expecting any favor in return.

If we love in that way, then, we can transform the world and people. Then, the new heaven and new earth the book of Revelation is talking about can be built in our world today, in anticipation of the fulfillment of God's Kingdom at the end of time. If we love in the way of Jesus, then God will dwell with us. We will be his people and he will be our God. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes so that there shall be no more death or mourning, no more wailing or pain. That is the glory to which we are called and we can obtain only by living like our Lord, totally given to God and to others.

Let us ask our Lord to help us love others in our daily lives and in the small things of life by showing tolerance, acceptance of the differences, compassion and forgiveness. Let us learn to love ourselves so that we may learn to love each other. May all who suffer because of the love of their beloved ones find in the example of Jesus encouragement, consolation and relief! Amen.

(Extract of my homily given on May 2, 2010, 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter)

**Acts 14: 21-27; Revelation 21: 1-5a; John 13: 31-33a, 34-35**



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