

**ECHOING GOD’S WORD
IN
THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 18, 2025**

SCRIPTURES:

Acts 14:21-22	New believers must persevere in faith.
Revelation 21:1-5	God will dwell among his people as in a holy place.
John 13:31-35	Jesus gives a new commandment: Love as he loved.

READ THE SCRIPTURES:

John:

For the next three Sundays, the Gospel proclamation is taken from the Great Farewell Discourse of Jesus at the Last Supper in the Gospel according to John. Jesus just finished washing the feet of his disciples. Judas has been dealt with and has departed: thus begins the “glorification of Jesus.”

“Glory” in the Bible always indicates the awesome presence and effective power of God shown through an otherwise ordinary event. Jesus will be glorified; that is, God’s presence and power will be made manifest in the death and resurrection of Jesus. God will be shown to be present, and God’s work will be seen as effective for redemption, for our salvation. “Glory” refers to God at work here on earth.

Jesus anticipates his being taken from among his disciples. After the brief appearances that will follow his resurrection, he will no longer be visibly with them. He leaves them with another kind of presence: the *love they have for one another*, patterned on the *love he has for them*. He will exercise his love for them forever if they obey this new commandment: to love one another as he has loved them. Since there is no *institution of the Eucharist* in the Gospel of John, there are several other “sacraments” of Christ’s love for his disciples that he gives to them. One is the washing of feet, which they are to do for each other in his name. The other is that they love one another.

Because we have reduced the numbers of sacraments to the bare essentials that fit the categories established by the Scholastic theologians of the Middle Ages, it is difficult for us to think of foot washing, with all that means — serving each other’s needs in the manner of humble slaves and loving one another in obedience to Christ — as being “sacraments” through which the Lord continues to be present in our midst.

Through our ministries toward each other, the Lord is really present still in the world. There are not two kinds of *real presences* when it comes to the Lord. Either the Lord is present or not present. We call the presence in the Eucharist the Real Presence. So are the other presences of Christ, for example when we love and forgive one another.

For the community of early Christians, which John represents through this Gospel, and through the Three Letters, the presence of Christ alive in the community stands as the chief feature of that community. They do not feel his absence whatsoever because they are doing for each other what he said they needed to do in order to continue his presence. As long as they practice those commandments, he stays with them still.

This short little proclamation from the Gospel all too often falls on deaf and bored ears. There are no parables in John; the whole Gospel is a parable. It all sounds so abstract: love, love,

love; serve, serve, serve! We've heard it all before. But have we practiced it? Jesus will come alive in our families and in our parishes when we fulfill these commandments.

Acts:

The *faith* was the bond that united all the communities of people who had come to believe in Jesus. It was imperative that the members of the various churches hold fast to the content of the faith that has been preached to them by the apostles. Paul wants to make a tour of all those communities where he had preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is during the Second Missionary Journey that we find him and Barnabas coming to Lystra and Iconium and on to Antioch (of Pisidia). Then, on to other places, and finally back to Antioch (of Syria) from where they had originated their mission and ministry. They gave a report to those who had authorized their mission as to the work of conversion which *God was accomplishing among the Gentiles through their preaching*.

Revelation:

For a people who were *from the desert*, the sea was a fear-inspiring place. It was where monsters dwelled; it was filled with dangers: storms, shipwrecks, drowning, and destruction. The Jews were not a seafaring people like the Phoenicians or the Greeks. The sea was an image of all that was hostile in the world. Of course, in the *new creation* of God's triumphant kingdom there would be no more sea! A New Jerusalem would come down from the hand of God, and God would dwell there in the midst of his people. All of reality will be transformed by the power of God because of the victory of Jesus Christ over everything that is evil, over sin itself.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. When you kneel in front of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle and adore Jesus Christ truly present there, do you also think or adoring him when you love someone or someone loves you in his name? Do you realize that you are making him present when you love and serve just as truly as when the priest prays the Great Eucharistic Prayer? (We do not deny that Jesus Christ is truly present in the Eucharist, but we emphasize other presences of the Lord which we have underplayed.)

2. Have you tried to explore the meaning of the word "glory" and the words "glorify" and "glorification" as Jesus uses these words? Can you see God showing his presence, his power, and His love in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Do you realize that it is not only in his ascension to the right hand of the Father that Jesus is "glorified" but also how the love of God for us was shown in the suffering and dying of Jesus? Explain to one another how this is so in your own life, in your pain as well as in your joys and successes.

3. Discuss the meaning of the white robes that priests and deacons wear when they serve at the altar. Are these the robes of those who are ordained? Are they not the robes of the baptized? I disrobed the eucharistic ministers when I came to a parish as pastor. Some of them were sad; some were angry. What I did was to make sure that people perceived these ministries as those of the laity and not "mini-priests!" Now, I feel like robbing them up again to emphasize that they function as baptized Christians! Discuss these issues.

PRAYER

**Merciful Father,
may these mysteries give us new purpose
and bring us to a new life in you.**

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

(Sacramentary: 5th Sunday)

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE:

We believe, with the power of supernatural faith, that the Church was founded on the faith and the ministry of the apostles. Just as the ancient Hebrews took their inspiration and found meaning in referring to the Twelve Tribes of Israel, so does the Church hold to the conviction that the faith and the teaching of the apostles has to be the measuring rod by which we are established and guided. That is what we mean when we assert, in the creeds, that we in the *one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church*.

God used the faith of the apostles and of others during the apostolic age to ground the communication of what we have come to know as the New Testament or the Christian Scriptures. All that was written in these books has the seal of authenticity upon it because its content is in complete harmony with the preaching of the apostles. As far back as 1964, the Biblical Commission, an agency of the Holy Father in Rome, stated that there were three stages in the development of the Gospel texts as these have been handed down to us: 1 – The life, teachings, and works of Jesus Christ; 2 – The preaching and teaching of the apostles as they proclaimed what they had seen and heard; and 3 – the writing of the text that the Church receives as Gospel and as divine revelation. The role of the apostles is central to this whole process of transmitting the content of the faith.

The bishops in the Church today are seen as successors of the apostles, with the authority and the power given to the Twelve. Just as the Bishop of Rome is the successor of Peter at the head of the apostolic group, so the bishops individually and collectively represent the apostles in governing and guiding the local churches and the universal Church.

Ordinations are handed down by the physical laying on of hands from the time of the apostles to our times, with no interruption or gap in time and touch. The truths of faith are handed down in guaranteed doctrine through the ages, from the mouths of the apostles to the written word to the oral tradition to the bishops of every age, held in truth and in love by the ministry of the Bishop of Rome, successor of Peter.

Ours is an apostolic Church because the apostles witnessed to its founding by Christ and continue to witness to its faithfulness to the truth.

(See: **The Catechism: #857-865**)

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