

# Fifth Sunday of Easter

## Year C



**FIRST READING**  
**Acts 14:21-27**

**PSALM**  
**Psalms 145:8-13**

**SECOND READING**  
**Revelation 21:1-5**

**GOSPEL**  
**John 13:31-33, 34-35**

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### PRAYER

#### Psalm 145:8-13

The LORD is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger  
and abounding in steadfast love.  
The LORD is good to all,  
and his compassion  
is over all that he has made.  
All your works  
shall give thanks to you, O LORD,  
and all your faithful shall bless you.  
They shall speak  
of the glory of your kingdom,  
and tell of your power,  
to make known to all people  
your mighty deeds,  
and the glorious splendor  
of your kingdom.  
Your kingdom  
is an everlasting kingdom,  
and your dominion endures  
throughout all generations.  
The LORD is faithful  
in all his words,  
and gracious in all his deeds.

### READING THE WORD

#### First Reading Acts 14:21-27

After Paul and Barnabas had proclaimed the good news to Derbe and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, then on

to Iconium and Antioch. There they strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying, "It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God." And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.

Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had completed. When they arrived, they called the church together and related all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles.

#### Second Reading Revelation 21:1-5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."

#### Gospel John 13:31-33, 34-35

When Judas had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

## HEARING THE WORD

### “Completing the Mission”

The liturgy of the fifth Sunday of Easter celebrates the completion of diverse stages in salvation history. These moments mark decisive steps towards the final completion of God’s project of the renewal of creation and the salvation of his people.

The first reading presents the final stages of the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas. Having been driven out of Pisidian Antioch and, subsequently, Iconium and Lystra, by hostile synagogue leaders, the two apostles eventually arrived in Derbe. Their mission in the city was a resounding success. They met no opposition there, with many Gentiles believing their proclamation and converting to the new faith. At this point, the apostles decided to return to their home city, Syrian Antioch, and the community which sent them (cf. Acts 13:1-3). Significantly, they decided to re-trace their steps and to return home visiting the same cities they were driven out of, despite obvious dangers. They knew that it was essential to strengthen the communities they had founded with words of encouragement and further instruction. Their message to the new believers was, “it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God”. The apostles knew full well that the opposition and hostility to this new and revolutionary faith was

unavoidable. They did not hide that fact from the new converts, but made them aware that, since Jesus was opposed and killed, they too might meet a similar fate. In the course of these visits, the apostles also put basic leadership structures in place. When they finally arrived home, to Syrian Antioch, the apostles reported “all that God had done with them”. They were keenly aware that their mission was ultimately God’s work.

The successful completion of this first missionary journey by Paul and Barnabas laid the foundations for the spread of Christianity into the Gentile world. Their faithful execution of God’s work, in the face of rejection and danger, opened the door for the inclusion of the Gentiles into the Christian movement on a large and systematic scale. Paul and Barnabas successfully completed their work. However, their achievement was, in fact, only a starting point of a new era of explosive growth and expansion of this new faith.

The second reading contains a splendid vision of the completion of God’s work of salvation which will happen at the end of time. As usual in the book of Revelation, this vision employs symbols to convey its message. The first symbol is that of a new heaven and a new earth, related to the final statement in today’s reading that God makes “all things new”. It means that salvation involves a fundamental transformation of

creation into something new and radically different from its former state. The rest of the passage specifies what this change involves.

First, the new creation implies the “disappearance of the sea”. This is a symbol for God’s final and definite victory over evil. Ancient Israelites saw the sea as a symbol of chaos and a dwelling place for the evil forces hostile to God and afflicting his people. The new creation begins with the elimination of the evil that corrupted the old order.

Then, the new creation is symbolized by the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven. This city is compared to a bride. In the Old Testament, Jerusalem was associated with God’s presence, while marriage was often used to describe the covenant between God and Israel. These two symbols combined symbolize the intimate union between God and his people. Thus, God’s direct presence in the midst of his people lies at the heart of the new creation, as is beautifully expressed in another phrase “he will dwell with them as their God; they will be his people”.

Finally, suffering and death will be eliminated. The phrases, “death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more” indicates a fundamental change of the existing world order with the complete removal of suffering in any form.

This vision was intended for God's faithful facing various afflictions because of their faith. By depicting the completion of God's work of salvation which lies in the future, the vision seeks to give hope and motivation to those suffering in the present. It assures them that the current world order will give way to a new creation where evil and its works, suffering and death, will be no more. It gives the afflicted ones hope for the final union with God. Above all, the vision reveals that God's work is, in a sense, already completed, because God has already designed and decided on the shape of this new world. All that remains for his people is faithfully to await its arrival.

The Gospel passage comes from the account of Jesus' last supper with his disciples. Immediately after Judas left the room to complete his work of betrayal, Jesus declared that his work of salvation has been completed. He used the expression, "now the Son of Man has been glorified and God has been glorified in him". In John's Gospel the term "glorification" has a very particular meaning. Jesus uses it in reference to his death, resurrection and return to the Father. Jesus' statement that he "has been glorified", used in the perfect tense, means that, with Judas's betrayal and his own decision to go to the cross, his mission is already accomplished. Nothing can now stop his glorification, soon to happen on the cross, and in the resurrection.

Jesus adds that his glorification is also the glorification of God. This means that Jesus acts in complete accordance with his Father's will and purpose. This mutual glorification highlights that Jesus and God act in complete unison, and for the same purpose of giving life to the world. By fulfilling his Father's will, Jesus glorifies God by completing his salvific work.

Jesus' glorification on the cross means that his disciples will remain in this world to complete their own task. Therefore, Jesus gives them his final instruction - a new commandment to love one another. This instruction points out to them the way to complete their own mission of becoming his mature disciples and worthy successors. They were prepared for discipleship by listening to his words and witnessing his works. But the process of becoming mature disciples will be completed only when they will be able to offer their lives to one another in love, as Jesus did when going to the cross.

The completion of God's work is always a joyful and hopeful event. Barnabas and Paul completed their first missionary journey laying foundations for the expansion of Christianity into the Gentile world. The book of Revelation anticipates, and describes, the completion of God' salvific work at the end of time, to give hope and strength to his suffering people on earth. Jesus, looking ahead to the cross, declared his work on earth as completed. He left his disciples the

final instruction on how to complete their own journey to the fullness of discipleship through the practice of love. In all these cases, the completion of God's work is, in fact, the beginning of something even greater. The faithful, while completing their God-given work, wait in joy for the completion of God's salvation project, while praying with the Psalmist, "all your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your faithful shall bless you".

## **LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD**

The fifth Sunday of Easter calls to our attention the importance of completing the mission entrusted to us by Christ. Through the liturgy of Eastertide, the Church helps us to make an evaluation of our missionary work as disciples of the risen Lord, through which Christ is glorified and so is the heavenly Father.

First, we recognize the power of the resurrected Christ working in us, a power that urges us on in love and grace to go out and be people of joy, love and fraternity. The first reading presents to us the powerful image of the glorification of God thorough the mission carried out by Paul and Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas show us the power and effectiveness of a mission characterized by generosity, humility and selflessness, even in the midst of rejection and struggles.

The idea of mission is not strange to the African con-

text, because everyone is believed to be born for a mission. Some can easily know their mission based on the situation surrounding their birth. For example, if you are named “Mayowa” in the Yoruba culture, it means your first mission is to bring joy to your family. If your mission on earth is not clear to your parents, they will consult the oracle so that you do not wander the earth aimlessly, without achieving the purpose for which you were created by the supreme being.

Like Paul and Barnabas everyone has a mission on earth, and the Lord is glorified when we fulfill our mission. The mission of Jesus was the salvation of the world. Thanks to him we have all been saved from a meaningless life, and eternal death. We are made a part of the new creation, so beautifully described in the second reading. Our mission as Christians is to live out an active witness to the salvation offered to us by Christ. In Christ we become new people who see a future filled with hope for the final union with God.

The Gospel reminds us of the characteristics of a person who has become a new creation, and what helps in carrying out this mission. The main requirement is love, love that is modeled on that of Christ. Love is accompanied by readiness to lay down ones’ life for others and the sharing of the love received from Christ. To sustain the newness of life in Christ we need a radical commitment to living like

him with selfless commitment to the good of others, through which we accomplish our mission. Eastertide is a time to evaluate our journey of faith and see if the love that was in Christ still drives us forward towards the victorious completion of our mission.

There are many reasons to look at the present life as a time of disappointment, suffering and frustration. But it is never a time of hopelessness when, in Christ, we find the inner strength to withstand all that afflicts us and look forward to the completion of our life mission and union with God.

## PROVERB

*“Happiness requires  
something to do,  
something to love  
and something  
to hope for.”*

## ACTION

### Self-examination:

What is my God-given mission in life?

How important is Christ’s suffering, death and resurrection in my life?

### Response to God:

During this season of Easter, I will daily acknowledge the

greatness of God shown in Christ’s salvific mission. I will thank God for making me worthy to participate in this saving mission in my own, be it small, way.

### Response to your World:

Conscious of the importance of my contribution to God’s salvific plan for the world, I will be conscientious and careful in fulfilling my tasks connected with the mission God has given me.

As a group we shall organize a special moment of prayer in each member’s home to pray for their particular intentions, to encourage them in their struggles and also to thank God with them for their achievements.

## PRAYER

*Jesus  
my savior and friend,  
thank you for this season  
that helps us to reflect  
on your suffering,  
death and resurrection;  
your mission for our salvation.  
May we never  
take your salvific mission  
for granted,  
but may we appreciate  
and live this reality  
in simple acts of love  
towards each other.  
We ask this  
through Jesus Christ our Lord  
who lives and reigns with you,  
one God forever and ever.  
Amen.*