

Jesus said to his disciples:

'As the Father has loved me,
so have I loved you.
Remain in my love.
If you keep my commandments
you will remain in my love,
just as I have kept my Father's commandments
and remain in his love.
I have told you this
so that my own joy may be in you
and your joy be complete.
This is my commandment:
love one another,
as I have loved you.
A man can have no greater love
than to lay down his life for his friends.
You are my friends,
if you do what I command you.
I shall not call you servants any more,
because a servant does not know
his master's business;
I call you friends,
because I have made known to you
everything I have learnt from my Father.
You did not choose me,
no, I chose you;
and I commissioned you
to go out and to bear fruit,
fruit that will last;
and then the Father will give you
anything you ask him in my name.
What I command you
is to love one another.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Breaking Open the Word



SIXTH WEEK OF EASTER / B

THE SAVING WORD

09 MAY 2021

LOVING ONE ANOTHER AS JESUS LOVED

We can only start to imagine the surprise and unsettling effect on Peter when Cornelius, a Roman centurion, prostrated himself before him. Cornelius was a representative of a hated and oppressive foreign government and here he publicly humiliates himself in front of a Galilean fisherman! Peter's own response is as generous and spontaneous as that of Cornelius: 'God has no favourites!' In saying this the barrier separating Jews and Gentiles is in the process of being shattered. When the gift of the Spirit is poured out so obviously on this Gentile household Peter can no longer see any reason to maintain long-held prejudices and instructs his companions to baptise them.

Breaking down barriers is at the heart of the readings for today as the Gospel invites us to no longer see God as a distant master to be feared. God loves us with that same love which leads Jesus to give his life for us. Changing our perception of God is one barrier to be overcome, but there is another, our perception of ourselves. Fear can keep us from God, from ourselves, and others. Invited to see ourselves as God's friends we are also invited to respond by sharing in Jesus' mission. To use the Gospel's words, we are commissioned to bear fruit, to overcome our reserve, and join in the task of loving one another as Jesus has already loved us. In Jesus' resurrection, we are not just saved from death, perhaps even more importantly, we are shown how to live.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING Acts 10: 25-26, 34-35, 44-48

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

The gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the gentiles also.

As Peter reached the house Cornelius went out to meet him, knelt at his feet and prostrated himself. But Peter helped him up. 'Stand up,' he said 'I am only a man after all!'

Then Peter addressed them: 'The truth I have now come to realise' he said 'is that God does not have favourites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him.'

While Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit came down on all the listeners. Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were all astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be poured out on the pagans too, since they could hear them speaking strange languages and proclaiming the greatness of God. Peter himself then said, 'Could anyone refuse the water of baptism to these people, now they have received the Holy Spirit just as much as we have?' He then gave orders for them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterwards they begged him to stay on for some days.'

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 97: 1-4, R. cf. v. 2
R. The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power. (or Alleluia!)

1. Sing a new song to the Lord / for he has worked wonders. / His right hand and his holy arm / have brought salvation. R.

2. The Lord has made known his salvation; / has shown his justice to the nations. / He has remembered his truth and love / for the house of Israel. R.

3. All the ends of the earth have seen / the salvation of our God. / Shout to the Lord all the earth, / ring out your joy. R.



SECOND READING

1 Jn 4: 7-10

A reading from the first letter of St John

God is love.

My dear people,
let us love one another
since love comes from God
and everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.

Anyone who fails to love can never have known God,
because God is love.

God's love for us was revealed
when God sent into the world his only Son
so that we could have life through him;
this is the love I mean:

not our love for God,
but God's love for us when he sent his Son
to be the sacrifice that takes our sins away.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 14: 23

Alleluia, alleluia! / All who love me will keep my words, / and my Father will love them and we will come to them. / Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Jn 15: 9-17

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.