

Agents of Love

I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Acts 14:21-27)

Gospel proclamation coupled with exhortations

²¹After they had **proclaimed the good news** to that city and made a **considerable number of disciples**, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch. ²²**They strengthened the spirits** of the disciples and **exhorted them to persevere** in the faith, saying, “It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”

²³They **appointed presbyters*** for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, **commended them to the Lord** in whom they had put their faith. ²⁴Then **they traveled** through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia.

Gospel proclamation coupled with accountability

²⁵After **proclaiming the word** at Perga they went down to Attalia. ²⁶From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now accomplished. ²⁷And when they arrived, they **called the church together** and **reported** what God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸Then they spent no little time with the disciples.

THE FOCUS: Missionary Activities of the Apostles

COMMENTARY

• The text describes the missionary efforts of Paul and Barnabas. (Enumerate the works of the early missionaries/ apostles/believers in the text)

REFLECTIONS

The text describes the apostles doing missionary work full blast.



Their task is to proclaim the good news, preach the word of the Lord.

They also follow up their converts and encourage them to persevere.

Conversion to the Lord brings along persecutions from loved ones.

Here the spiritual leader has an important role in keeping the faith of his/her community.

No disciple should attempt to do missionary work, if one has no intention of following up, without being accountable to the group or church.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13)

**I WILL PRAISE YOUR NAME FOREVER,
MY KING AND MY GOD. Or, ALLELUIA**

SECOND READING (Rev 21:1-5a)

New

¹* ^aThen I saw a **new heaven and a new earth**. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.* ^{2b}I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem,* coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Passing of old order

^{3c}I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“Behold, God’s dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people* and God himself will always be with them [as their God]. ^{4d}He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away.”

New

^{5e}The one who sat on the throne* said, “Behold, I make all things new.”

THE FOCUS: A New Heaven and a New Earth

COMMENTARY

- The text is about the vision of the author of the new heaven and the new earth.
- Included in the vision is the new Jerusalem, with imagery of a bride adorned for her husband (v.2).
- V.3 tells of God’s dwelling with his people. This is newness.
- V.4 talks about sadness being wiped out. Finally, death will be conquered. This is newness.
- V.5 summarizes everything “I make all things new.

REFLECTIONS

There can be no better vision than this “a new heaven and a new earth.”

We are fond of making vision-mission statements but we seldom hear of this “new heaven and new earth” included.

This vision is the vision of God, envisioned by God; all encompassing, not parochial. It is cosmic and ouranic (*my invention, ouranos is the Greek word for heaven, sky*)

This vision is characterized with joy (wedding), God’s presence, being possessed by God, elimination of death and bereavement, no separations (sea, v.1), no trace (disappearance) of old (former earth, v.1, and old order,v.4).

The former earth or the old order is the absence of God, non-recognition of God by the people, no joy, all tears, death.

John’s (God’s) vision is something totally new, not based on the old, not recycled, not a combination of the old and the new. It is entirely new, not a copy or improvement of the present order. A great and ultimate surprise!

It consists in seeing and hearing = enjoying everything without fear, more than we can imagine.

GOSPEL READING (Jn 13:31-33a.34-35)

Glorification of Jesus

^{31*} When he had left, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.* ^{32*}[If God is glorified in him,] God will also glorify him in himself, and he will glorify him at once. ^{33*}My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. You will look for me,

Commandment of Love

^{34*}I give you a new commandment:* love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. ^{35*}This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

TWO FOCI: Glorification and Love

COMMENTARY

- One may wonder why the text is a combination of two great themes: glorification and love.
- The second part of John’s gospel is popularly known as book of glory (First Part, Book of Signs, chs. 1-12; Second Part, chs 13-21 Book of Glory).
- The opening line indicates that Jesus is now bidding farewell. He is going back to the Father who glorifies him and who is also glorified by him (Jesus).
- Vv.31-32 speak of the glorification of Jesus, the Son of Man. Not only Jesus is glorified, but God himself.
- In v.33, Jesus bids goodbye to his apostles. His goodbye is the beginning of his glorification (going back to heaven).
- Vv.34-35 speaks of loving one another. Christian discipleship is loving one another.

REFLECTIONS

Glorification is a mystery. But it refers to his reward for being faithful son of God. Glorification is the opposite of humiliation (dying naked on the cross).

Those who are entitled to it are those who have been faithful to God’s commands.

- Equally important in the reading is the theme of love. And the preacher must better focus on this. We cannot have two foci, unless we have the luxury of time in our preaching.
 - The commandment of love is relational, mutual, reciprocal.
 - Love is commanded. We have no choice. It is not sentimentalism. It does not have anything to do with one's mood. It is not romanticism.
 - It is God's imperative. Love is loving even if you are not in the mood for it.
 - The criterion for love is the love of Jesus for his disciples.
 - Let us be known that we are disciples of the Lord by loving one another.
 - Discipleship is not how much we know about doctrine or the bible, but how much we love one another.
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II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

The First Reading talks about the missionary activities of the apostles. The Second Reading is about the new heaven and new earth. The Gospel Reading is about loving one another.

How to develop your homily

Begin by telling a story about your experience of love. (love from parents, love from your crush, love from your relatives and friends).

The readings for today talk about love.

First of all, the Gospel Reading enjoins everyone to love another. Jesus' command comes as his last will and testament as he is departing from this life. Disciples must be known by people by the way they treat one another (love one another=giving justice, respect to one another).

The First Reading shows how the apostles, Paul and Barnabas love each other by their teamwork, and how they care for their communities (converts, recruits, new believers). They go around preaching the word of the Lord, exhorting them to persevere in the faith in times of trials.

The Second Reading shows what is in store for us when there is perfect love in the imagery of

the new heaven and new earth. In love there is total newness. God shows his love to us in a new context (of new heaven and new earth).

To love we must adapt this vision of the new heaven and new earth. Loving one another helps us transform ourselves into a new heaven and new earth.

Loving one another helps other people recognize we are Jesus' disciples.

What happens when we do not love another (which also means each one is living in isolation, independence, seclusion)?

We are living in the former earth and old order, where God is absent, we can't feel his presence.

Without loving one another, we do not develop normally as social beings. We cannot contribute anything to the building up of the church, Christ's body.

In our Parish Pastoral Council (PPC), there must be mutual love and respect among all the members and the parish priest, during meetings, plannings and implementations.

In the coming election, how can we practice reciprocal love? Certainly, vote buying, intimidation, cheating has nothing to do with mutual love; it is mutual destruction. It puts into crisis all that we are trying to build up: moral fiber of the society, credibility of authorities and system.

Love has nothing to do with empty promises and dirty politics. Christians must take effort to reverse this relentless machinations of the evil minds of politicians who want to gain or maintain power at all cost.

The eucharist is the sacrament of love of Jesus Christ for all of us. Here we show our love to Christ as he shows his love to us by giving himself to us and us to him. It should strengthen those who have difficulty loving, because they feel betrayed, rejected and unforgiven. And we start anew to anticipate the new heaven and the new earth.

-Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM

III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Can you recall the actions of concern for the Filipinos to ensure a clean, honest and peaceful elections. (HM)