

Communion of People



I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Acts 15:1-2,22-29)

Context: Other evangelizers from Judea teaching another and reaction

¹* “Some who had come down from Judea were instructing the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved.”^b ²Because there arose no little dissension and debate by Paul and Barnabas with them, it was decided that Paul, Barnabas, and some of the others **should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and presbyters about this question.**

Response from Jerusalem church: to send representatives to Antioch

²²Then the apostles and presbyters, in agreement with the whole church, decided to choose representatives and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. The ones chosen were Judas, who was called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers. ²³This is the letter delivered by them: “The apostles and the presbyters, your brothers, to the brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia of Gentile origin: greetings. ²⁴Since we have heard that some of our number [who went out] without any mandate from us have upset you with their teachings and disturbed your peace of mind, ²⁵we have with one accord decided to choose representatives and to send them to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷So we are sending Judas and Silas who will also convey this same message by word of mouth: ^{28k}“It is the decision of the holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities, ^{29l}namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage. If

you keep free of these, you will be doing what is right. Farewell.”

THE FOCUS: On the Question of Gentile’s Keeping Jewish Laws

COMMENTARY

- V.22 indicates that the leaders of the Jerusalem church deliberate the problem of circumcision and communicate their position to Antioch through their representatives (Judas and Silas).
- V.23 contains the greetings of the letter of the Jerusalem church to Antiochean church.
- V.24 bears content of the letter. It recognizes the slipping out of their members preaching the gospel without being authorized (without mandate) (illegal operation!) = confusion and disturbance.
- In v.25, the authorized representatives are to go back with Barnabas and Paul (v.27).
- Vv.28-29 spells out the **do’s and don’t’s** expected of a Gentile convert. Definitely, the Gentile converts should not be burdened to take upon the Jewish law (yoke).

REFLECTIONS

As early as the time of the apostles, there is already a problem of misrepresentation. There are members who are overzealous but poorly trained, poor equipped to embark on a mission work.

As a result, they create confusion and chaos in the budding Christian communities. At this time, those in Jerusalem are now acting and thinking professionally. By this time, they have understood who Jesus is and his message very well

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8)
O GOD, LET ALL THE NATIONS PRAISE YOU! Or, ALLELUIA.

SECOND READING (Rev 21:10-14,22-23)

The vision of the new city of Jerusalem

¹⁰He took me in spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me **the holy city Jerusalem** coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹It gleamed with the splendor of God. Its radiance was like that of a precious stone, like jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It had a massive, high wall, with twelve gates where twelve angels were stationed and on which names were inscribed, [the names] of the twelve tribes of the Israelites. ¹³^kThere were three gates facing east, three north, three south, and three west. ¹⁴^tThe wall of the city had twelve courses of stones as its foundation, on which were inscribed the twelve names of the twelve apostles* of the Lamb.

No temple

²²* ⁿI saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb. ²³* ^oThe city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb.

THE FOCUS: The Vision of the New Jerusalem

COMMENTARY

• The text describes in detail the new city of Jerusalem, what Jerusalem looks like at the end of time. Go through how impressive the looks are!

REFLECTIONS

When we deal with the book of Revelation, we must be ready to accept the work of imagination. Symbolisms play a great role in describing what cannot be described by the naked eye. Human words are still trying to capture what otherwise cannot be normally described. (*TH*, trying hard).

But of course, we have to dig deeper into the meaning of the images presented by the imaginative author.

The promise of God to reward those who are martyred for their faith is unimaginable. The city of Jerusalem which every Jew wanted to tread upon to feel the presence of God, is awe-inspiring, to the superlative degree.

Christians should be ready to accept this kind

of imagery, to experience another point of view.

GOSPEL READING (Jn 14:23-29)

What happens if we love Jesus?

^{23a}Jesus answered and said to him, “Whoever **loves me** will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him

What happens if we do not?

²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

²⁵^c“I have told you this while I am with you. ²⁶^rThe Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you.

Gift of Peace

²⁷^sPeace* I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

The correct disposition if we love Jesus

²⁸* ‘You heard me tell you, ‘I am going away and I will come back to you.’ **If you loved me**, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹^uAnd now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe.

THE FOCUS: On Loving Jesus

COMMENTARY

- The text continues Jesus’ farewell discourse to his disciples, in the context of the Last Supper.
- In v.23, Jesus succinctly states the relationship of love for him and keeping his word. Love and word go together. No one can love Jesus without taking his words seriously.
- V.25 introduces the holy Spirit and his role (to teach and remind [v.26]).
- V.27 speaks of peace as an object to be left behind. This peace is different from the peace given by the world: through wars, death of the enemy, etc.
- In v.28 Jesus articulates his departure and teaches that no one should be sad at his departure, but should be joyful instead.

REFLECTIONS

There are many points to develop in the gospel text: love, word, peace, holy Spirit, joy, departure.

All these are developed in the context of Jesus' farewell to his disciples.

Jesus challenges his disciples to profit from his departure. They must interpret it correctly so that the desire effect may come upon them.

The apostles must be "detached" from Jesus. Here we must understand this as detached from his earthly existence.

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

The First Reading talks about Gentile converts keeping what is necessary only. They should not be burdened by Jewish laws. The Second Reading talks about the new Jerusalem (grandiose). The Gospel Reading talks about loving Jesus and its implications.

How to develop your homily

Tell a story how you bid goodbye to your dying gradparent (*lolo or lola*) or friend. What does he say? When someone is bidding goodbye, we usually pay attention to one's words of wisdom.

The Gospel Reading affirms that there is always an end to human relationships, no matter how intimate. Death may soon end all these.

We Christians must realize that the death of Jesus (and his resurrection and ascension) ended the close physical and intimate relationship with his disciples.

The apostles also experienced what we experience when our idol, ideal person, or loved one dies or physically separates from us and goes to another place, even without any hope of coming back.

What remains are nice memories and words of wisdom to live by. Here we must focus our energies if we truly love the guy.

The First Reading pictures the first followers of Jesus who learned a lot from Jesus, both from his earth life and from his departure. They have embraced believers not only coming from their

Jewish ranks, but also from the Gentiles'.

These apostles as years go by exhibit their own interpretation of Jesus' teachings of love when they encounter a conflict among themselves.

Love is shown by giving due respect to those who know (the eyewitnesses). Love is shown through humble consultation and authorized representation.

Love is not doing what you think they are saying. Love is representing Jesus. You cannot do it if you do not know Jesus (through the gospels) and the predicament of the apostles.

Hence we still need to connect with them when we talk about our faith. We do not operate independently from them (Jesus, apostles and others).

Love is not imposing additional burden to those who come to us to share our faith. We should not play games imposing strange rules from their point of view. It is enough to present the basic rules from God through the teachings of the apostles (the whole NT) and their interpreters who came later.

The Second Reading describes the destiny of the true and faithful followers of Jesus: those who represent him in the missionary work, those who convinced others to believe also in Jesus. The new Jerusalem is beyond our imagination.

Certainly, we will bring confusions and misrepresentations of who Jesus is or what Christianity is all about, if we play the rules of the crooked politicians and businessmen.

Alas, many church leaders also are preoccupied representing themselves (by telling everyone they have been there in the parish for so long a time, they know everything, therefore, everyone should follow them even if their ideas and ways are long obsolete because they have not undergone ongoing formation).

These are the people who never give the Holy Spirit a chance. The Holy Spirit works in the newcomers. Paul was a newcomer, many Gentiles too. The Holy Spirit brings out new things, does not repeat the same old things.

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III. OUR CONTEXT

1. How do you encourage more the participation of lay people in your parish or communities?