

May 7, 2020
Thursday of the 4th Week of Easter
Acts 13:13-35
John 13:16-20

Today's Activities & Tasks

- Ready Daily Readings
- Reflection from Fr. Brian Johnson
- Prayer and Challenge for the Day
- USCCB Video: “We Are Called”
- USCCB Video Reflection

Reflection Easter Week 4 Thursday Acts 13:13-35 & John 13:16-20

We get to sit in on a typical synagogue service in today's first reading. Acts 13:14 says, “On the sabbath, they (Paul's missionary team) entered the synagogue and took their seats.” This reminds me of the dramatic scene in Jesus' life when he returned to his home of Nazareth and attended a local synagogue service in Luke 4:16-17 and “He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah.” After reading a passage, Jesus “rolling up the scroll, and handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him (4:20). In Jesus' case, it would have been expected that He then deliver a message or exposition on the text until they ended the service with blessing prayer and hymns. Of course, he ‘drops the mic’ and simply says, “This is fulfilled in your hearing”(vs 21) to mean “I embody this text-I am the meaning”. Well, in Paul's case, he and his friends enter a local synagogue to make their ‘sabbath obligation’ and while they are there, the prayer leader puts them on the spot after the readings, asking them “if one of you has a word of exhortation for the people, please speak” (Acts 13:15). Of course, Paul never misses an opportunity to ‘preach Christ”. In a later letter Paul even says, “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel” (1 Cor 9:16), so we know he cannot pass this chance up. So Paul runs through a lengthy sermon tracing the history of God's covenants with the Hebrew people, leading up to the Messiah's coming. His extended bible study also reminds me of Jesus' with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24). But, something I would like for us to think about is how fluid and open the synagogue service was to welcome guests to offer a prophetic word of preaching or teaching. Imagine if we just opened up the homily time in mass to have a word of prophecy from anyone present? How might that work out? Is it something to try sometime? Maybe next January on the new feast Sunday begun by Pope Francis called Word of God Sunday (3rd Sunday of new year), we could open up a group scripture discussion from the congregation instead of a homily at the ambo? But we do have a version of this guest speaking, such as when we host a traveling catholic evangelist for a parish mission. But we do still follow the tight order of mass within

expected time constraints. But with this example from Acts in the early church, we sense a pretty open-ended invitation to go on preaching as long as the Spirit moved him. An early church document (like the first ever catechism) titled the Didache, has a line in chapter 10 that lays out a simple outline of how the Eucharist can be celebrated, and includes this directive: ***“But permit the prophets to make Thanksgiving as much as they desire.”*** Permit them to go on as long as they desire! I am sure that those first Christians at times, knowing certain prophets, said, “We may be here a while.” But even just this tiny description from the Acts of the Apostles about the structure of synagogue services, tells me what good company we are in by having such a regular and uniform pattern within our Catholic Liturgy. I love our rituals! They come from the beginning! Even the resurrection appearances of Jesus (without & with Thomas) attest to routine and ritual as on that ‘first day of the week’, when we hear of the apostles gathering again in the room of the last supper (same time of day a week apart-making it a regular prayer gathering!) This may introduce the gospel for today where we hear of Jesus’ teaching by word and example at the Last Supper, where Jesus not only institutes the Holy Eucharist (‘Do this in Memory of Me’) but also establishes a ritual of service-feet washing and says, “What I have done for you, you must do for one another” (John 13:15). To further call His disciples to live humility through service to others, Jesus reminds them that “no servant is greater than his master, nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him” (Jn 13:16). Like St Paul, our message is always Christ’s life and Christ’s sacrifice of His life for us! May we always take every opportunity to share His message & generously give his example to others as much as we can!

Prayer for the Day:

Dear Lord, I will try this day to live a simple, sincere and serene life, repelling promptly every thought of discontent, anxiety, discouragement, impurity, and self-seeking; cultivating cheerfulness, charity, and the habit of holy silence; exercising economy in expenditure, generosity in giving, carefulness in conversation, diligence in appointed service, fidelity to every trust, and a childlike faith in God. In particular I will try to be faithful in those habits of prayer, work, study, physical exercise, eating, and sleep which I believe the Holy Spirit has shown me to be right. And as I cannot in my own strength do this, nor even with a hope of success attempt it, I look to thee, O Lord God my Father, in Jesus my Savior, and ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Challenge for the Day:

Take a moment to chart your every work and rest today. Keep a daily log of activities and review it before you go to bed, offering thanks, blessing, a plan to repeat the good or repent for the bad the next day! What did or didn’t happen today for God’s glory?

USCCB Video **"We are Called: Mary and Vocational Discernment"**

Mary's devotion to God and willingness to say "yes" to him is something Catholics learn very early in faith formation. And Mary's deep faith and dedication to doing God's will can be an inspiration for anyone searching to fulfill the will of God, no matter their vocation. Fr. Ralph O'Donnell explores these themes further in a short video from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Click on the link below to watch:

"We are Called: Mary and Vocational Discernment"

USCCB Video Reflection

Use "Mary, Our Model" reflection resource as a guide for discussion after watching the video. Reflections can be done individually or in small groups.

Mary, Our Model

COMPANION RESOURCE FOR THE USCCB VIDEO "WE ARE CALLED: MARY AND VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT"