

May 15, 2020
Friday of the Fifth Week of Easter
Acts 15:22-31
John 15:12-17

Today's Activities & Tasks

- Read Daily Readings
- Reflection from Fr. Brian Johnson
- Prayer and Challenge for the Day
- “*Count on God*” Poem
- *Our Lady of Guadalupe* Prayer Card for coronavirus pandemic

Reflection Easter Week 5 Friday Acts 15:22-31 & John 15:12-17

We hear Jesus speak about Christians’ true love of one another in the gospel. I think we see that genuine concern for other people and the accommodation of them as best as we can in the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles. We see it mostly in Paul and Barnabas who waste no time going straight to Jerusalem to settle a matter that upset the consciences of recent converts they had shepherded into the local Church. Surprisingly, we also see it from Jerusalem headquarters as they send return delegates back down to Antioch to help smooth over feathers. How often do you see a bureaucracy admit responsibility and take sacrificial action to make amends for its insensitivity? Well, we see it in today’s reading from Acts. What had basically happened was that Paul and Barnabas had welcomed some converts into the Christian community, baptizing them and teaching them the social moral code of caring for neighbors and serving God. Then some bossy preachers showed up from Jerusalem demanding circumcision as a sign of one’s salvation. This was news to the converts and they are deeply troubled about whether they are saved or not, since they are not circumcised. When Paul and Barnabas confer with the ‘pillars’ in Jerusalem, a resolution and remedy to the difference is worked out. Jerusalem sends delegates down to comfort the converts and to encourage their continued Christian formation and practice. Acts 15:24 tells about their peacemaking apology from the conciliatory letter saying, “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”. Interestingly though, they slip in an excuse about the troublemakers bullying the new converts ‘without a mandate from us’ (as if they were rogue preachers). I also like how the letter from headquarters acts like a crafty politician eager to get a photo taken with a ‘local hero’ to gain better acceptance among the home crowd. They say in Acts 15:25 ‘we send representatives to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul’. Slipping in that ‘our beloved’ part! But I commend headquarters for actually sending down Judas and Silas as personal

representatives to meet in person and make amends for the divisive & 'troubling teaching'. And apparently Judas and Silas don't just show up and run, but they stay a while and continue to preach and encourage the Church in Antioch. Like good pastors, Judas and Silas stay a while in the community to listen, pray with and simply be among the church. Paul is so good like that too, as he always demonstrates the great Shepherding style he received from Christ Himself. What I mean is that Paul has the good habit of staying in touch with churches he has served, either by return pastoral visits for or faithfully sending letters that deal with real time issues affecting the people. All of them are great but especially his shorter letters to the Philippians and Galatians are wonderful examples of his pastoring heart.

And we see where he learned such love in the gospel today. Jesus tells us that true friendship means genuine and sacrificial love of others. He says, *"Love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friend"* (John 15:12-13) We are given many opportunities to demonstrate such love in these uncertain and anxious times of ours now. People often tell me that they are not sure how to react when they go in public now, and that they feel all the time like they may be doing something wrong, afraid that they are not the exact prescribed feet apart or they've accidentally let a mask slip a little on their cheek or feel bad that they can't hold the door for someone. I think we do our best for everybody when we simply try to put ourselves in the shoes of the other person and consider how they may wish to be treated. Of course, a smile and greeting surely helps too! But we can offer our love to others by simply being patient and slowing down in any of our interactions with them, giving a chance to listen to them or just offer our help safely in any way for them. We want to be safe, but also we are concerned to serve, because Jesus teaches us that we are created to show His love for each other!

Prayer for the Day:

Dear Lord, We pray for our communities -neighbors of all ages, backgrounds, education, occupations, politics and religious viewpoints. May we look at others as if through your eyes, Jesus, be less judging, and more loving. May we see them, like ourselves, as not perfect or finished but as works in progress that will be completed in due time by your hands. We pray for all of them; not only those we know by name and chat with through the day, but also the less familiar faces about whom we know so little and pass by with just a smile. Bless their homes and families, and let your love and peace shine within this community that smiles may turn into conversations, and strangers become friends. We pray this through Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Amen

Challenge for the Day:

Say a little prayer, even as simple as 'Lord bless him/her who just said 'hi' to me, and bless their home & family' for everyone you encounter today.

Count on God

Count your blessings instead of your crosses,
Count your gains instead of your losses,
Count your joys instead of your woes,
Count your friends instead of your foes.
Count your courage instead of your fears,
Count your laughs instead of your tears.
Count your full years instead of your lean,
Count your kind deeds instead of your mean.
Count your health instead of your wealth,
Count on God instead of yourself.

Prayer Card

Click on link below or picture
for prayer card

Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe during Coronavirus Pandemic



Holy Virgin of Guadalupe,
Queen of the Angels and Mother of
the Americas,
We fly to you today as your beloved children.
We ask you to intercede for us with your Son,
as you did at the wedding in Cana.

Pray for us, loving Mother,
and give for our nation and world,
and for all our families and loved ones,
the protection of your holy angels,
that we may be spared the worst of
this illness.

For those already afflicted,
we ask you to obtain the grace of healing
and deliverance.
Hear the cries of those who are vulnerable and fearful,
wipe away their tears and help them to trust.

In this time of trial and testing,
teach all of us in the Church to love one another and to be
patient and kind.
Help us to bring the peace of Jesus to our land and to our hearts.

We come to you with confidence,
knowing that you truly are our compassionate mother,
healer of the sick and cause of our joy.

Shelter us under the mantle of your protection,
keep us in the embrace of your arms,
help us always to know the love of your Son, Jesus.
Amen.



Billy Hogue

