

May 4, 2020
Monday of the 4th Week of Easter
Acts 11:1-18
John 10:11-18

Today's Activities & Tasks

- Ready Daily Readings
- Reflection from Fr. Brian Johnson
- Prayer and Challenge for the Day
- Sunday's Children's Bulletin
- May Crowning Activities

Reflection Easter Week 4 Monday Acts 11:1-18 & John 10:11-18

In the early Church (period of the Acts of the Apostles) as the community began to grow and spread, like any family or as with any group, it began to have growing pains. With new members joining, the assembly of believers experienced the normal pressures of growth. The church needed to accommodate and create space for the new members, much like a family does with the birth of new children into the home. We heard last week about the accommodation (creation of deacon-helpers Acts 6) needed to ensure that the Greek-speaking widows were cared for the same as the Hebrew-speaking widows. Two major issues that the early church struggled mightily over were the matters of dietary laws and circumcision. Of course, God would lead the Church through these divisive challenges by the Holy Spirit showing the way, but it was bumpy and quite contentious at times. Acts 15:2 describes the issue of circumcision as stirring up 'no little dissension'. That is such an understated way of saying 'a major blowup'. Of course, that chapter of Acts 15 also shows how to handle disagreements by utilizing a further tool of the Holy Spirit in settling disturbance in the church: a local council or gathering to discern together a solution to a dispute. In that case, circumcision is eliminated as a covenant requirement. But in today's reading we hear about the issue of what foods it is okay to eat and what is not okay to eat as required by God. And God works through visions (dreams) three times to enlighten Peter to let go of the clean/unclean animal distinction that the Old Testament made so much for the Hebrews diet. For an example of how extreme and nitpicking the differentiation of pure and impure animals could become, please see Deuteronomy 14:4-10 for what you could eat, and 14:12-19 for what you couldn't eat. Likely, many questions came up as to why some animals made the cut and others did not (and many don't want to make it!) With Peter, God intervenes to settle the debate that prevented many Christians from continuing on in the faith after baptism because they didn't know their salvation depended upon a certain diet. Basically, God tells Peter in the dream, "Who are you, human, to declare 'impure' what I God have created?" (Acts 11:9) By such a proclamation, God was eliminating

the uniquely distinctive diet of the Hebrews so it would not be an obstacle or stumbling block to new followers of Jesus coming from non-Hebrew backgrounds.

Jesus Himself had dealt with this in His teaching, if the apostles had remembered. In Mark 7: 18-19 Jesus emphasized that the purity of a person was determined by what came out of their mouth, not what entered their mouth. He said, *"Do you not realize that everything that goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters not the heart but the stomach and passes out into the latrine? (Thus he declared all foods clean)"*. But also in His mission commands to the apostles, He had said, "If you are welcomed into a town, eat what they set before you" (Luke 10:8). That sounds fairly open-ended about what food is permissible a Christian (anything-set before you!)

But back to Peter's vision from God that all animals were clean, I like how God removes any confusion or doubt by having Peter's vision seconded by another vision to a potential convert named Cornelius in Acts 10:22. Cornelius was told by an angel to seek out Peter for admittance to the church and to confirm for Peter, that God was behind both visions. Acts 10:17 says that "While Peter was in doubt about the meaning of the vision he had seen, the men sent by Cornelius asked for Simon's house and arrived at the entrance." So God is on both ends of this vision series, a further proof that God was leading and directing His Church to make these accommodations for converts who had no Judaic background. By continued prayer and seeking Spirit-led solutions that Church overcomes the natural and expected tensions of growing pains!

As we might be tempted to determine for God who is in and who is out of His Church, Jesus the Good Shepherd reminds us in the gospel today that the Flock is His! John 10:16, says "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd." I pray often about these 'other sheep'. So interesting! Perhaps before I go to establishing the pedigree of each sheep in Jesus' flock, I ought to first make sure I am in the fold!

Prayer for the Day: Merciful Father, at the start of this new week, I pray that I may be open to your new accommodations for others to join your Son's assembly of the Church. May I always acknowledge that is your flock and you are our Shepherd. May you guard my mouth to only speak praise of you and truth regarding your will. Let only those things that please you come from my lips. Let praise, laughter and the joy of your goodness be what I desire to share with others and speak to them about all the hours of the day. When I am tempted to detract from or deny goodness, fill my heart and mouth with words of grace from You. May my mouth be an instrument for the new life you wish to give others through me. Lord, you are righteous in all that you do. So, I give you thanks for who you are in my life. I give you thanks for your compassion towards your creatures. I give you thanks for never leaving or forsaking your own. I give you thanks that you are a place of prayerful refuge. May I draw closer and closer to Jesus your Son, in whose name I pray. Amen.

Challenge for the Day: Is everyone done with spring cleaning? Or just starting? Anyone done windows, yet? Or how about planted all your spring flowers? Find a flower today and share it with someone, somehow safely! May flowers!

Sunday Children's Bulletin

The Activity Pages we call the "Children's Bulletin" was not published on our website yesterday. Below is the link for the Children's Bulletin. Of course, these activity pages can be completed by children of all ages!

[Children's Bulletin: The Shepherd's Voice](#)

May Crowning Activities

By **[Jared Dees, *The Religion Teacher*](#)**

May is the month of Mary and one of the most popular activities to venerate the Mother of God during this month is to participate in a May crowning ceremony. Jared Dees put together this collection of activities ideas from around the web to prepare students and families for a May crowning or to organize your own little ceremony at home.

[May Crowning Activities](#)