

May 5, 2020  
Tuesday of the 4<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter

**Acts 11:19-26**

**John 10:22-30**

Today's Activities & Tasks

- Ready Daily Readings
- Reflection from Fr. Brian Johnson
- Prayer and Challenge for the Day
- May Crowning Activities

Reflection Easter Week 4 Tuesday Acts 11:19-26 & John 10:22-30

In Acts 1:8, just before ascending in glory to the Father, Jesus gave mission commands to the apostles, “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” I see a mission advancement here starting with Jerusalem, branching out through Judea and Samaria and then to people of all the world. First stage of it was the Jewish Mission and then it shifts into a Gentile Mission (everyone else!) Paul mentions such a two part mission in Galatians 2:7, when he refers to himself being “entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised (Gentile), just as Peter was given to preach to the circumcised (Jewish)”. It does seem in today’s first reading, as Acts 11:19 says that “the first preaching of the word [was] to no one but Jews.” After Pentecost, the preaching seems initially to have all been done in synagogues. Yet, after the explosion of persecutions such as Stephen’s death, the church began ‘scattering’. But this scattering is not a defeat, but rather, just a dispersing and reordering to begin including gentile areas and villages. Again, the word for the day is ‘opportunity’. Being dispersed into such areas as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, opened up new fields of possible converts to Christianity. Acts 11:20 says that missionaries of the gospel “began to speak to the Greeks as well, proclaiming the Lord Jesus.” As one door was being blocked, an additional one was being opened. Someone might ask, “Was God guiding the church into this new direction?” Yes, absolutely as we hear in Acts 11:21 that “The hand of the Lord was with them and **a great number** who believed turned to the Lord.” Acts 11:26 (also v. 24) will reinforce that God blesses this outreach to the Gentiles as it bears fruit in “**a large**

number of people being taught” by them. But between these two stages of church mission, not all the initial followers of Jesus (who were mostly all of Hebrew origin) understood the universality (to all) of Jesus’ mission. I sense that a lot of the Hebrew resistance came about because they thought that since they were all of Jewish origin, then maybe before a person became Christian they should be schooled in Hebrew customs/traditions first. Simply put, since Jesus was Jewish first, then maybe everyone else should become Jewish first then be baptized. In other words, how much of the Jewish law and traditions must be kept by new faithful gentile Christians? So when the Gentile mission in Antioch picks up ‘Holy Spirit steam’ growing, the Jewish headquarters in Jerusalem send a delegate to investigate. Acts 11:22 says, “news about them reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas [to go] to Antioch.” We see Barnabas play this role of mediator earlier in the story when it comes to Paul (once Saul) needing help to be accepted by the church (Acts 9:27). Barnabas gives a good report back to the presence of God working in the church at Antioch and the orthodoxy being upheld there (Acts 11:23). Of course, this was a fluid period of rapid expansion, so there was great concern among the Church (as always) to keep unity in practice and consistent statement of common belief in Jesus. The Holy Spirit is what keeps the Church together and continued its growth and fruit.

We see the concern for conservation among the leaders in the synagogue and in the church in this reading. This is what conservatives want: continuity with inherited tradition. I believe they receive that interest from Jesus himself. We hear Jesus say as much in the gospel today, when he continues to teach about the love of the shepherd for each of his sheep. He is close to each of them and He is eager to keep or conserve them. John 10:28, has Jesus saying he will not lose any of His sheep. In His words, “No one can take them out of my hand.” Verse 29 continues to back up this protection from Jesus by saying ‘The Father’ too will keep them in His hand! Back in John 6:39, Jesus had offered a similar conservative motive about the sheep by saying that, ‘I shall not lose any of those The Father has given Me.....’ That is conservation: to not lose any of the gift entrusted to oneself for safe-keeping by someone. Not to waste, leave behind or neglect any of the precious gift bequeathed to a person. And the Acts of the Apostles will continue to tell of the church’s spread and growth following the command of Jesus in Matthew 28:19 to ‘go baptize all nations, ...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you’. We will continue to see the Holy Spirit create opportunities for both the conservation of the faith and the dramatic increase

and spread of the Christian faith. As a Good Shepherd, Jesus wants His flock to remain together, and for each to conserve and protect the other!

**Prayer for the Day:**

High Priestly Prayer of Jesus: (John 17: 20-24)

Father, I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me....”

**Challenge for the Day:**

How can I evangelize for Christ today? How may I be a witness for or share my belief in Christ? Can I explain my Catholic practices or traditions if I was asked in school or at work or neighborhood (safely distant!)?

## **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**