

Cycle C Fifth Sunday of Easter

Reading 1 ACTS 14:21-27

After Paul and Barnabas had proclaimed the good news to that city and made a considerable number of disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch. They strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith, saying, "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." They appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith. Then they traveled through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia. After proclaiming the word at Perga they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now accomplished. And when they arrived, they called the church together and reported what God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

Responsorial Psalm PS 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13

R. (cf. 1) I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness. The LORD is good to all

and compassionate toward all his works.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD, and let your faithful ones bless you. Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

Let them make known your might to the children of Adam, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

Your kingdom is a kingdom for all ages, and your dominion endures through all generations.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

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Reading 2 REV 21:1-5A

Then I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them as their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, or the old order has passed away." The One who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."

Gospel JN 13:31-33A, 34-35

When Judas had left them, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and God will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

“...He had opened the door of faith...”

In today’s first reading, we heard from St. Paul and his sidekick Barnabas telling us some of their many stops on their first missionary journey. Their travelogue, however, seems quite uninspiring ... They called the church together, but I wonder if they kept the church’s attention. There were no dazzling reports of how the mighty God split open the heavens, or showered down tongues of fire to smote their enemies. Instead, they said God had opened a door...the door of faith. We can almost hear the community yawning.

It might be surprising to discover that door opening, that door attending, that door hospitality was actually an ancient ministry of the church...a minor priestly order that went by the name of “porter.”

Every candidate for priesthood before 1972 received this lowest of minor orders, and though officially abolished by Pope Paul VI, it reemerged as our Hospitality Ministry, embodied in our women and men at St. Andrew who unlock and open the doors, and who prepare a welcoming environment. I am not always sure we say “thank you” enough to our volunteers and staff who at this and every Eucharistic celebration prepare the gifts of hosts and wine, who light the candles, and who open those doors saying “Good Morning”... they all welcome us home. So let us say to our St Andrew ministers of Hospitality...Please will our Sacristans stand, our altar servers, our ushers and our staff, stand. A big THANK YOU for your often overlooked, and yet so gracious and timely ministries! [applause]

Door opening is a good way to interpret the commandment Jesus gave us in today’s Gospel, *“love one another.”* “Love” can be such an overused, easily weakened word we too often reduced to a “heart” emoticon in a text message. The love of which Jesus speaks about, however, is not an emotion but a way of life that acknowledges and respects the dignity of others, whether friends, or strangers, or foe. Jesus’ new commandment *“As I have loved you, so you also should love one another”* takes seriously John’s revelation in the 2nd reading that God’s dwelling is with the human race, not with one nation, one

religion, or one ideology. God dwells with the whole human race...all human beings are worthy of respect and dignity and love.

I have to confess that recently I have been rather pessimistic. I've been thinking how tragic it is that in today's world opening doors seems to be out of favor. Everywhere we look there seems to be much more door slamming...whether it is slamming the door on our moral integrity, refugees fleeing war, on immigrants, on food and healthcare security, on environmental protection, on international cooperation, or slamming the door on even common decency. I kept thinking, "Where's the love one another?... The world is blind, we need to help them see!"...and then our new Pope was elected!

With all the talk about the conclave, I was surprised to hear there were 3 Cardinals in Chicago. I grew up in Chicago and we have many family and friends there, so of course I knew about Cardinal Blaze Cupich and our former Archbishop Wilton Gregory, now retired Cardinal Gregory. But a 3rd Cardinal? Even when I heard his name, Cardinal Robert Prevost, I never heard of him before. Well now I know some of my friends in Chicago actually know him, they call him Father Bob....and the world now calls him Pope Leo XIV...even our non-Catholic friends are excited! I soon came to know he has strong personal bonds both here and far beyond the United States. Like all of us, he came from immigrants; his Haitian, Cuban, and Creole Black heritage in the "*cultural gumbo pot*" of Louisiana was traced back to 1850. Pope Leo spent only a third of his life living in Chicago. He is truly a Pope of the Americas, South and North Americas, with dual citizenship in Peru and the United States. He was a missionary Pastor who served the poor in the remote trenches of the Church for decades. I also must mention, Pope Leo is an Augustinian who follows St. Augustine's spiritual ideals of God's love and mercy in unity, harmony, friendship, charity, and service.

During the conclave I was concerned when I heard the Cardinals really didn't know each other. They were from distant lands around the globe. But Cardinal Prevost was the perfect fit for a conclave which recognized we are a church seeking to love one another...in unity,

harmony, friendship, charity, and service...And, as it turns out, many Cardinals did know him because of his leadership in the influential dicastery of bishops. Bishop and then Cardinal Prevost was Pope Francis' advocate by elevating clerics with a pastoral approach focusing on the poor and having open doors (there are those open doors again!). They practiced inclusion as Pope Francis said, "Todos, Todos, Todos!...Everyone, Everyone, Everyone!"

The clinchers for me were his first words as Pope, the first words of the Risen Christ: "*Peace be with you,*" and then learning why he chose Leo XIV as his name. His namesake Pope Leo XIII is known as the "Father of Social Justice" for his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, "on Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor." This work established a body of teaching in response to "*the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class*" during the industrial revolution of the late 1800s. It has shaped Catholic Social Teaching ever since.

So now, we have a Pope! Leo, a Pastor with a gentle manner and with "*the smell of the sheep*" on him from serving the poor for decades in remote trenches. A multi-lingual and engaging bridge builder known by many in the Church, and now across the world. Pope Leo XIV, a Door Opener and practitioner of Catholic Social Teachings! This election had to be done by the Holy Spirit! God Bless our Pope Leo...[applause!]

("All are Welcome" is softly played)

At the beginning of this morning's Mass, we happily sang the wonderful song "All Are Welcome" ... Now as Jesus' real presence in Word and Eucharist pierces us to the core, and prepares us to serve others in the world, let us each, in our own way take up the utterly mundane task of being Door Openers. May we become Jesus' own "porters" day in and day out so that everyone will be inspired to respect and dignify and love others who intersect their lives...this is how we all will come to recognize that the Risen Christ is dwelling with all mankind...throughout the world. God's love and mercy is for everyone! "...He opened the door of faith..." And the Church says...Amen!