

WSC REFLECTION GUIDE

Readings: Acts 14:21-27
Psalm 145:8-13
Revelation 21:1-5a
John 13:31-33a, 34-35

5th Sunday of Easter
May 2, 2010

Word: Disciples of Christ have love for one another.

Theme: We are disciples of Christ when we follow His commandment of love. [Perseverance]

Promise: *“He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them as their God.”* (Rev 21:3b)

Reflection:

It is easy for anyone to gloss over and not pay too much attention to the Lord's farewell address to his closest followers at the Last Supper. As He bids goodbye to them in today's gospel, He says: ***“I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another,”*** (Jn 13:34). This is in fact the Order discerned by the Council of Servant Leaders for the month of May.

But one might ask, why is it a new commandment when it sounds the same as the commandment that dates back to the Old Testament, ***“You shall love your neighbor as yourself,”*** (Lev 19:18). Look again. This time He is not just saying, "Love one another" but rather, 'love one another as I have loved you'. We are to love one another - not just like - but love one another as He loves us. This is love without bounds or limits, and mirrors the extent of Jesus' love for us when He laid down His life on the cross. Are we prepared to obey His farewell instruction to the letter?

Jesus' succeeding words are just as compelling, as He goes on to say, ***“This is how all will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another,”*** (John 13:35). Like other communities, we are not spared from petty bickering and strife. How do you think we will measure up in the eyes of others from the outside looking in? Will they recognize us as disciples of Christ?

His instructions direct us to imitate His entire life. To love as He loved us, to forgive as He forgave, and show compassion as He showed compassion, and to serve one another as He did. We are to be prepared to give up our lives as He did on the cross. This is the new commandment—not that we should love, for that's an old one, but rather that we should love as Jesus loved. We all know that this is easier said than done.

Let's pause for a moment and think about our fellow members in community, not the ones we like, but the really unpleasant and even spiteful ones. Do we love them? Do we love them enough to be willing to suffer and die for them? Do we love them enough to forgive them even as they abandon us or betray us or conspire to hurt us? This is a tough call even for fully mature Christians and covenanted members of our community. But as followers of Christ, we are expected to face trials, as declared in the first reading, **"It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,"** (Acts 14:22).

In his first encyclical (an official teaching document of the Church) *entitled Deus Caritas Est*, 'God is Love,' Pope Benedict XVI wrote, "Love of neighbor is thus shown to be possible in the way proclaimed by the bible, by Jesus. It consists in the very fact that, in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know. This can only take place on the basis of an intimate encounter with God, an encounter which has become a communion of will, even affecting my feelings. Then I learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ."

What is impossible on our own is made possible by God. **"With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible,"** (Mat 19:26). God's grace enables us to get rid of the conceit, bitterness and envy in our hearts. With His resurrection, many miracles and wonders are created in our own lives. He causes us to love each other, and to love as He loved. We should therefore not be reluctant to love those who do not deserve it, no matter how seemingly impossible or degrading or unreciprocated it may be. The Holy Spirit will acclaim our humility and wash away our vanity and selfishness. **"Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves,"** St Paul tells us in Phil 2:3.

Easter signals not only our own re-birth but that of our Community. As we follow His commandment of love, together we claim His promise, **"He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them as their God,"** (Rev 21:3b).

Prayer:

(We end this reflection with the prayer of the Papal Household Preacher Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa in one of his sermons on Good Friday at the St. Peter's Basilica):

"How could one speak appropriately of love if you are forgotten, our Savior and Redeemer, who gave yourself to save all? How could one speak appropriately of love if we forgot you, O Holy Spirit, who keep alive that sacrifice of love and remind the believer of the obligation to love you and to love his neighbor as himself?" How could one speak of love, if we forgot you, O good Father, who did not spare your own Son, but gave him for us all?"

Suggested Personal Reflection Guide:

- What has characterized my habitual attitude towards other people (those close to me as well as those I only interact with occasionally) over the last two weeks?
- How much of an effort have I made to try and see every person not in terms of their usefulness or agreeableness to me, but in terms of their being infinitely loved by God?
- How much of an effort have I made to help those around me, to serve them, to make their lives more pleasant and fulfilling, to show them the love and gentleness of God through expressing sincere concern and interest in them?

Next Week's Daily Mass Reading Guide:

May 03, 2010 (Mon):	1 Cor 15:1-8; Ps 19:2-4; Jn 14:6-14
May 04, 2010 (Tue):	Acts 14:19-28; Ps 145:10-13, 21; Jn 14:27-31
May 05, 2010 (Wed):	Acts 15:1-6; Ps 122:1-5; Jn 15:1-8
May 06, 2010 (Thur):	Acts 15:7-21; Ps 96:1-3, 10; Jn 15:9-11
May 07, 2010 (Fri):	Acts 15:22-31; Ps 57:8-10, 12; Jn 15:12-17
May 08, 2010 (Sat):	Acts 16:1-10; Ps 100:1-3, 5; Jn 15:18-21

“Ignorance of the Bible is ignorance of Christ. Read your Bible daily!”