6th Sunday of Easter, Year C

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

This is called "the Pentecost of the pagans," and according to Warren Carroll, it took place about ten years after the death of Christ.

25. When Peter entered, Cornelius This very wealthy Italian military man, who was probably part of a contingent of auxiliary archers, was the first gentile convert. met him and, falling at his feet, paid him homage. It is difficult for the pagans to realize what is happening when God manifests himself to them. Their first reaction is to think that these must be celestial beings or gods in human form.
26. Peter, however, raised him up, saying, "Get up. I myself am also a human being." Peter recoils, not from the honor offered him, but from the worship offered for not even the holy angels can accept the adoration that belongs to God alone (Rev. 19:10).
34. Then Peter proceeded to speak and said, "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. God shows no favoritism to one nation over another in the New Covenant, but all stand as equal candidates for divine blessing and sonship. This is a big deal for Peter who had earlier denied membership in the "new faith" to non-Jews. Traditionally, the Jew believed that only for the Jews did God have any use and that other nations were quite outside the mercy and privileges of God. The really strict Jew would have no contact with a Gentile or even with a Jew who did not observe the Law. The revelation of God's choice of Israel to be the people of God did not mean he withheld the divine favor from other men.
35. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him." Cornelius was already "one who feared God," whom we might call a "half convert" to Judaism. This meant that he accepted the Jewish Law but was not circumcised.
44. While Peter was still speaking these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who listening to the word. This Pentecostal experience follows much the same format as the original: 1) Peter preached the gospel, 2) the Spirit descended in a dramatic way, 3) the recipients spoke in different tongues and 4) a call was issued for Baptism.
45. The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter These were Jewish converts who had come from Joppa with him. were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also,
46. for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God. Just as at the first Pentecost appearance when the Spirit came upon Peter and the apostles. Then Peter responded,
47. "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit even as we have?" The difference between this and the first Pentecost is that for the 120 in the upper room, no water baptism is mentioned. Everyone after the 120 who received the Spirit were also baptized with water as a reception into the church. Here we see that God took the initiative for no one baptized uncircumcised pagans until God showed by the visible sign of tongues that he had already given them the Holy Spirit.
48. He ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Cornelius and his household were baptized, the first Gentiles to enter the Church of Christ. This shows Peter's authority as head of the church in the first decade for he allowed them to become Christians without being circumcised and living as Jews under the Mosaic Law. From the

very day of Pentecost the Church has celebrated and administered holy Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and the reception of the Holy Spirit for those who wish to be saved.

1 John 4:7-10

Being children of God, we are called to show that divine relationship in our dealings with others. We are to show love in our dealings with our fellow man. This is not the love that is natural to man, but the love that has been revealed by God and is perceived by faith.

7. Beloved, John, the writer of this letter, refers to himself as "the beloved disciple." His love for God was truly born of his having first been loved by Jesus. Here he calls us, the readers, "beloved" in order to emphasize that OUR loving is preceded by the love of God for us. let us love one another, This call to love is the basic vocation of every human being! It is important to understand that love is a DECISION that involves a CHOICE followed by an ACTION. because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. The divine attributes, God's perfections, which he has to the highest degree, are the cause of our virtues: for example, because God is holy, we have been given a capacity to be holy. Similarly, because God is love, we can love. True love, true charity comes from God.
8. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. Love not only comes from God as from a source, it is itself the very essence of God. What is amazing, St. Alphonsus teaches, "is that he could have saved us without suffering or dying and yet he chose a life of toil and humiliation, and a bitter and ignominious death, even death on a cross, something reserved for the very worst offenders. And why was it that, when he could have redeemed us without suffering, he chose to embrace death on the Cross? To show us how much he loved us."
9. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. God took the initiative! He revealed his innermost secret: God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to SHARE IN THAT EXCHANGE!
10. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Some form of the word "love" is used 10 times in this short passage. Paul has tried to explain what it means in 1 Cor. 13: "Love is patient; love is kind. Love is not jealous, it does not put on airs, it is not snobbish. Love is never rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not prone to anger; neither does it brood over injuries. Love does not rejoice in what is wrong but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure." In Romans 12 he also tries to explain that "Your love must be sincere. Detest what is evil, cling to what is good. Love one another with the affection of brothers."

John 15:9-17

Last week we heard Jesus teach of the vine and the branches and how God the vine dresser prunes the branches to increase their yield and how He removes completely the branches which remain unproductive. Today we hear that teaching continued. The key word in this section is love. It begins with the Father's love for Christ (v.9), moves on to Jesus' love for his friends (vv. 9, 12-13), is reciprocated in the disciples' loving obedience to Christ (vv. 10,

14), and radiates out through their love for one another (vv. 12, 17). It is this love that will be the source of their joy (v. 11) and the essential condition of their intimate friendship with the Lord (vv. 14-15).
Jesus said to his disciples: (This took place at the Last Supper immediately after Judas left the room to betray Jesus. It is part of the "farewell discourse.")

9. "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. The disciples must continue to keep themselves worthy of the protection of Christ's love. For most of us, this will mean a constant contact with Jesus Christ: arranging life, arranging prayer, arranging silence in such a way that there is never a day when we give ourselves a chance to forget him.
10. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments Love for the Father expresses itself through obeying his commandments as Jesus did. The disciples must continue to keep themselves worthy of the protection of Christ's love. Not "once saved, always saved", they must continue to live and love in Christ. Love that does not follow the commandments is license. When speaking of the great commandment to love God and neighbor in Matthew 22 Jesus says, "On these two commandments the whole law is based and the prophets as well." and remain in his love.
11. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy might be complete. The certainty that God loves us is the source of Christian joy but it is also something which calls for a fruitful response on our part. This should take the form of a fervent desire to do God's will in everything, that is, to keep his commandments, in imitation of Jesus Christ, who did the will of his Father.
12. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. This has often been called a "New Commandment" because even after 20 centuries, so few people have tried it! This love of neighbor which Jesus preaches is much more demanding than the Old Testament because Christian love is not measured by man's heart but by the heart of Christ who gave up his life on the Cross. Because the word "commandment" usually suggests a prohibition, "Thou shalt not," note that this one is positive! The works of mercy are specific charitable actions recommended by the church with which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.
13. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. Jesus' own joyous sacrifice is the example which we are all called to emulate. Not senseless death, but the giving of our very selves for others. The love of Christ gives us the ability to do this.
14. You are my friends if you do what I command you. The promise of intimacy with Jesus is conditional because it can be fulfilled only IF we commit ourselves to his teaching. Abraham was the first to be called a "friend" of God in the Bible. … In the courts of the Roman Emperors and of the eastern kings, there was a very select group of men called "the friends of the king" or "the friends of the Emperor." At all times they had access to the king: they even had the right to come to his bedchamber at the beginning of the day. He talked to

them before he talked to his generals, his rulers, and his statesmen. The friends of the king were those who had the closest and the most intimate connection with him. What an offer! To be his friend means that no longer do we need to gaze longingly at God from afar off; we are not like slaves who have no right whatever to enter into the presence of the master; we are not like a crowd whose only glimpse of the king is in the passing on some state occasion. Jesus offers US this close familiarity!

15. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. In the normal course of things, the slave is not admitted to the counsels of the master, he simply obeys. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. We have been loved into a new existence. The Christian "hears" the Son even as the Son has "heard" the Father. Here he returns to the theme of bearing fruit that we read last week where Christ is the vine and we are the branches. Christ takes the initiative in calling us to bear fruit. The only way to spread Christianity is to be Christian. The only way to bring others into the Christian faith is to show them the fruit of the Christian life. In order to attract men into Christianity, we must live it so that the fruits of it may be so wonderful that others may desire them for themselves.(17)

16. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, Jesus can demand so much because he loves so much! so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. When we pray we must first realize that we never know better than God. The essence of prayer is not that we say to God: "Thy will be changed." But that we say to Him: "Thy will be done." So often real prayer must be, not that God would send us the things we wish, but that he would make us able to accept the things he wills.

17. This I command you: love one another." When we love, we give up ourselves as the center of things.

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This Thursday is Ascension Thursday, the day to start your novena or nine days of prayer to the Holy Spirit before Pentecost Sunday.

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Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "The Founding Of Christendom" by Warren H. Carroll, (2) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Acts Of The Apostles" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (3) "The Navarre Bible: Acts Of The Apostles," (4) "The Acts Of The Apostles" by William Barclay, (5) "Catechism Of The Catholic Church," (6) "Saint Joseph Edition of The New American Bible," (7) "The Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Acts Of The Apostles" by William S. Kurtz, S.J., (8) The Commentary Notes of Tim Gray, (9) "The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken & Marie Finn, (10) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (11) "The Navarre Bible: Catholic Epistles," (12) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2006" by Martin Connell, (13) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2003" by Aelred R. Rosser, (14) "The Catholic Bible Study: The Gospel of St. John" by Stephen K. Ray, (15) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 1997" by Lawrence E. Mick, (16) "Workbook For Lectors And Gospel Readers: 1991" by Graziano Marcheschi, (17) "The Gospel Of John" by William Barclay, (18) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of John" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (19) "The Navarre Bible: St. John", (20) "The Collegeville Bible Commentary: John" by Neal M. Flanagan, O.S.M., and (21) The St. Paul Center For Biblical Theology Online Founded By Dr. Scott Hahn.

This prayer for the gifts of the Holy Spirit is distributed by the Apostles of the Holy Spirit:

Jesus, before ascending into Heaven, you promised to send the Holy Spirit to finish your work in the souls of your apostles and disciples. Grant the same Holy Spirit to me that He may perfect in my soul the work of His grace and His love.

Come Holy Spirit, grant me the spirit of WISDOM that I may not be attached to the perishable things of this world, but aspire only after the things that are eternal. Grant me the spirit of UNDERSTANDING to enlighten my mind with the light of your divine truth, the spirit of COUNSEL that I may ever choose the surest way of pleasing God and gaining Heaven, the spirit of FORTITUDE that I may bear my cross and that I may overcome with courage all the obstacles that oppose my sanctification, and the spirit of KNOWLEDGE that I may know God and know myself and grow perfect in the image of the saints.

Grant me the spirit of PIETY that I may find the service of God sweet and enjoy showing your goodness to others, and the spirit of FEAR that I may be filled with a loving reverence toward God and may avoid anything that may displease Him. Mark me, dear Holy Spirit, with the sign of a true apostle and make me alive with your Spirit in all things. Amen.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.