7th Sunday of Easter

This Sunday is between Ascension Thursday and Pentecost Sunday. Today we hear of one of the first acts that the Apostles undertake under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This event takes place in the upper room, where the apostles and Jesus' disciples have taken refuge after the Ascension. Jesus had commanded them (Acts 1:4-5) "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:15-17, 20a, 20c-26

The apostles immediately returned to Jerusalem after Christ ascended into heaven and had what was probably the first prayer meeting of the young new church. Jesus had told them that they were to wait and pray and then they would be baptized in the Holy Spirit. They were in the upstairs room where they had celebrated the Last Supper. Mary and some of the other women were with them. At one point during the nine days of waiting, this event took place.

15. Peter stood up in the midst of the brothers The leadership role of Peter in the early Church was evident from the start.
There was a group of about one hundred and twenty The Jewish Mishnah required any community's officers to number one-tenth of its numerical strength: 120 was the number required to have 12 officers.
persons in the one place.
16. He said, "My brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke The apostles maintained the Jewish belief that the Scriptures were the words of God expressed in the written words of men.
beforehand through the mouth of David, concerning Judas, who was the guide for those who arrested Jesus. Psalm 41:10 "Even my friend who had my trust and partook of my bread, has raised his heel against me."
17. He was numbered among us and was allotted a share in this ministry. Only Matthew and Luke record stories about the death of Judas. Matthew recounts his suicide by hanging while Luke focuses on a headlong fall with the result of his death being disembowelment. The brevity of both accounts makes it impossible to reconstruct the exact sequence of events.
20a. For it is written in the Book of Psalms:
20c. 'May another take his office.' This refers to a position used in the early Church for an Episcopal office or bishopric. The replacement of one apostle with another is a pattern repeated in the succession of bishops from the first century to the present day. According to Catholic Hierarchy: Its Bishops and Dioceses, on Dec. 3, 2008 there were 5,081 bishops. The Holy Spirit, who presides over the Church, governs her by no other ministers than those of apostolic succession. Every Catholic bishop can show his line of spiritual descent, i.e., who consecrated him, who consecrated his consecrator, and so on, all the way back to the Apostles.
21. Therefore, it is necessary that one of the men who accompanied us the whole time the Lord Jesus came and went among us,
22. beginning from the baptism of John This means the Baptism of Jesus by John. Until the day on which he was taken up from us, become with us a witness to his resurrection." The Apostles are the witnesses par excellence of Jesus' public life. The Church is "apostolic" (one of the four marks or characteristics of the church of Christ which we profess in the Creed) because it relies on the solid testimony of people who were witnesses of Jesus Christ. The twelve Apostles certify that Jesus of Nazareth and the risen Lord are one and the same person and that the words and actions of Jesus are preserved and passed on by the Church. The Church continues to be taught, sanctified, and

guided by the apostles until Christ's return through their successors. The term "martyr" means "witness" and all the apostles except St. John were martyred for the faith.
23. So they proposed two, Judas called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias.
24. Then they prayed, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen The community considered that God had already made his choice and all that remained was for him to make his will known.
25. to take the place in this apostolic ministry from which Judas turned away to go to his own place." While verse 14 says that they devoted themselves to prayer, this was the first recorded prayer of the Church.
26. Then they gave lots to them. This was a process of selection where they wrote the names of the candidates on stones or sticks which were placed in a container which was shaken until one of the stones flew out. That man was declared elected. It was not a game of chance but a venerated means of discerning God's will. It was also a means for assigning ritual duties to Levitical priests serving in the Temple. This method of appointing people did not continue to be used in the Church for very long.
And the lot fell upon Matthias, We know very little about him except that he was one of the seventy and that he was a witness to the Baptism and the Resurrection. He was probably stoned to death by a crowd of hostile Jews thus becoming the second of the restored 12 to die. Neither Matthias nor Judas called Barsabbas is mentioned in Scripture again.
And he was counted with the eleven apostles. In addition to fulfilling the Psalm as a reason for restoring the number of apostles to 12, the new faith in Christ was seen as the fulfillment of the older faith of Israel. The full complement of Israel was composed of 12 tribes. Symbolically, then, the original 12 chosen by Jesus represent the "new" Israel and the completion of God's plan for the chosen people. Note that the number 12 does not represent an ongoing institution in the life of the Church for the Apostle James is never replaced after his martyrdom in 42 A.D.

1 John 4:11-16
11. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. St. Augustine says that love of God is the first thing in the order of commands and love of neighbor is the first thing in the order of practice. Any "vision" of God, which does not prove itself by manifesting the love that is the divine life shared with men, is an illusion.
12. No one has ever seen God. Abraham welcomed God to dinner and Moses saw God face to face but this was written for people who were ignorant of Hebrew Tradition. Augustine comments that "You who do not yet see God, will, by loving your neighbor, merit to see Him. Love of neighbor cleanses our eyes to see God." In this life, the way to be in communion with God is by brotherly love.
Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us. John anticipates our need for proof or evidence of the divine presence. That evidence is our love for one another. It is the guarantee that we are dwelling in God and God is dwelling in us.
13. This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us of his Spirit. The fruits that we bear as a result of the Spirit living in us are: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control and chastity.
14. Moreover, we have seen and testify that the Father sent his son as savior of the world.
15. Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God.
16. We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. It is a property of love that the Lover becomes transformed into that which is loved. If we love vile and perishable things, we become vile and

perishable. According to Romans 8, there are 10 things that CANNOT separate us from the love of God: death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, and no other creature. Actually, the only thing that CAN separate us from the love of God is our own deliberate choice.

John 17:11b-19

This is the Priestly Prayer of Jesus that was said at the end of the Last Supper. The Scriptures often tell us that he prayed, but this and the Our Father are the only examples of the words that he used. In the first part of the prayer, Jesus prays for himself and in the last part he prays for all believers. What we hear today is from the middle part where he prays for his disciples. This prayer takes place in the upper room during the Last Supper. Immediately after this prayer Jesus and the eleven (Judas having left to betray him) go to Gethsemane for the Agony in the Garden.

11. Lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus prayed, saying: "Holy Father, keep them in your name The name is "I Am" and John (18:5) points out the use of the name to protect the disciples in the Garden when the soldiers came to get Jesus: "Who is it you want?" "Jesus the Nazorean," they replied. "I am he," he answered. As Jesus said to them, "I am he," they retreated slightly and fell to the ground.
that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are one. The oneness between Jesus and the Father is the *source* of the unity among the disciples.
12. When I was with them I protected them in your name that you gave me and I guarded them, We learn from this prayer that the world is a tremendous battleground where the forces under Satan's power and those under God's authority are at war.
and none of them was lost except the son of destruction, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Judas Iscariot went astray through his own fault, but God, who knows all things in advance, made it possible for this betrayal of the Messiah to be foretold. Jesus makes this reference to Judas' treachery in order to strengthen the Apostles' faith by showing that he knew everything in advance.
13. But now I am coming to you. I speak this in the world so that they may share my joy completely. True happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement—however beneficial it may be—such as science, technology, and art, or indeed in any creature, but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love.
14. I gave them your word, and the world The disciples remain IN the world after Jesus returns to the Father, but they are not OF the world because they are not allied with the godless forces that fight against the kingdom of God. Because evil men have been enslaved by sin and by the devil, "the ruler of the world", the "world" sometimes means God's enemy, something opposed to Christ and his followers. In this sense the "world" is evil and therefore Jesus is not of the world, nor are his disciples. It is this meaning which is used by traditional teaching which describes the world, the flesh and the devil as enemies of the soul against which one has to be forever vigilant.
hated them, because they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.
15. I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one. We pray this same thing at the end of the Our Father: "deliver us from evil." It is impossible to understand the saving action of Christ if we ignore the destructive action of Satan. Pope John Paul II told us "The battle against the devil is still being fought today because the devil is still alive and active in the world. The evil that surrounds us today, the disorders that plague our society, man's inconsistency and brokenness are not only the results of Original Sin but also the result of Satan's pervasive and dark action."

16. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. The followers of Christ are different from the world, as are their values and standards, and they can expect only hatred from the world. Their destiny is to affect the world but not to be affected by it.
17. Consecrate them This means to sanctify them for a holy purpose, which here concerns the spread and preservation of divine truth. The disciples are the priests of the New Law. Just as the priests of the Old Law were consecrated or made holy, so are those of the New Law, but in a far more intimate and personal way.
in the truth. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and the work of consecration will be done by the Spirit of Truth.
Your word is truth. Similar language is used in the OT for the consecration and ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests. Here the disciples are set apart for the priestly service of the gospel.
18. As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. They are to be in the world but not of the world. He equips his followers to live in the world to win the world. Whomever God calls, He equips. The mission of Christ becomes the mission of the Church once he returns to the Father. Cooperation in this work is the responsibility of all baptized believers but the apostles and their ordained successors are sent forth in a special way for the ministry of preaching the word and sanctifying the world.
19. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth. The apostolic mission of the Church is the same as Christ's mission from the Father; therefore their consecration is the same.

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken & Marie Finn, (2) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Acts Of The Apostles" With Introduction, Commentary and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (3) "Catholic Digest Trivia Quiz" May, 2003, (4) "The Founding Of Christendom" by Warren H. Carroll, (5) "The Twelve: The Lives of the Apostles After Calvary" by C. Bernard Ruffin, (6) "Catechism Of The Catholic Church," (7) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (8) "The Navarre Bible: Acts Of The Apostles," (9) "Bible Basics" by Steve Kellmeyer, (10) "The Navarre Bible: Catholic Epistles," (11) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2003" by Aelred R. Rosser, (12) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of John" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (13) "The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken & Marie Finn, (14) Encyclical Letter: "Ecclesia De Eucharistia" by Pope John Paul II , (15) "The Navarre Bible: St. John", and (16) The St. Paul Center For Biblical Theology Online Founded By Dr. Scott Hahn.

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