



FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Year C

Acts 14:21-27

Revelation 21:1-5a

John 13:31-33a, 34-35

GATHERING

(An unlit candle, a bible open to this week's gospel and a clear glass bowl of water rest on a table covered with white cloth. A few signs reading Foreclosure, For Sale, or Going Out of Business are spread on the table.)

This week we reflect on signs of new life that Jesus offers and the new commandment that animates that life. Last week we reflected on what it means to follow Jesus in our time and what it means to be an evangelizer today. How did you follow Jesus and speak his good news to folks this past week? *(Members share briefly.)*

OPENING PRAYER

(The candle is lit. The leader calls the community to a time of attention to the presence of God with them. After some minutes of silence, the prayer continues as follows.)

Leader: These Easter weeks are times to savor and put into practice some of the fruits of the resurrection.

All: May God give us eyes to see the buds of his new life opening in and around us.

Leader: The Light of Christ brightens new paths before us.

All: May God give us confidence to follow Christ into new places, new relationships and new experiences.

Leader: The Easter water washes us clean in Christ.

All: May God give us renewed strength through the waters of our baptismal renewal to walk with Jesus and walk as Jesus to bring new life to our world.

(A reflective instrumental selection is played. When the music is complete, the community prays as follows.)

All: LORD, you gave us a new commandment of love and a new way to see, think, act, and live. Support us with your grace as we learn to live in your newness, O LORD. Amen.

Focus Question

- ◆ Remember a time when the old gave way to a new possibility for you.

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the gospel reading, the facilitator invites members to mention a word, a phrase or image from one of the readings that particularly struck them this week. Members then read over the commentary and consider the questions in silence for several minutes before entering into conversation.)

Commentary

As we walk down Any Street, USA these days, we see discouraging signs that read, *Going Out of Business*, *CLOSED*, or *Foreclosure*. Seeing a sign that reads, *Under New Management*, gives us some hope. That sign says that somebody believes they can bring new life here.

The situation we find ourselves in these days is without a doubt, troubling, indeed unnerving. But we are coming to understand that an economic and financial system that was so overextended could not be sustained. It needs new management.

At a whole different level, of course, we hear in this week's scriptures that the religious world of the time is *under new management*. In Acts, we hear about Paul and Barnabas preaching the good news. The Spirit of the resurrected Jesus permeates them. They share this new life and new communities of believers take shape.

As they go about proclaiming the good news, they see the Spirit at work in the lives of the people. They exhort them to persevere in the faith and remind them suffering is an inevitable part of their new life. They appoint elders and move on to the next town. At each town, the pattern is repeated. These are disciples on fire with the love of Christ. Because of that, they preach a new perspective on everything!

In the Book of Revelation, John declares it is time for everything to be new. He sees "a new heaven and a new earth." The old order has died. God is doing something new. There is "a new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven." God is dwelling with his people. God will be with them through their mourning and sorrow. The One who sits on the throne is a tender God, bringing newness about and asking newness of us. "Behold," he says, "I make all things new."

It is often not easy to adjust to the new – even new shoes, new eyeglasses or, even a new job. The tension between old habits and new desires can be a formidable force to reckon with. Adjusting to the new experience of life of which Jesus speaks goes much deeper than shoes. Jesus knows this. In the gospel we hear his "new commandment" for this new age: "Love one another." Total self-gift will be the distinguishing sign – the signature sign – of the lives of his followers.

This law of life under his management is not yet something that guides us in this culture. The greed and selfishness that has marked our economic and financial systems make this quite clear. We need to build a new world that is committed to the common good. To do that, people of faith need to live from hearts that are *under new management*. Modeling our lives on Jesus

and his new commandment of love is, admittedly, a life-long task. Modeling this way of love is how we collaborate with him "to make all things new."

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ To what extent does Jesus' new commandment for us to love one another shape your daily life?
- ◆ How do you know that you're living what you believe?
- ◆ You renewed your baptismal promises to live Christ's new life five weeks ago. What effect has that had on you?
- ◆ How are you adjusting to life in today's economy?
- ◆ To what extent do the consumer values of this culture *manage* your life?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

(The facilitator poses the question, "What does God ask of you/us in light of our sharing of life and faith this week?" After a few minutes of reflection, the facilitator invites conversation in response to the question.)

- ◆ Set aside ten minutes a day to follow the daily liturgical readings and gain insights into the scriptures by subscribing to the *Living With Christ* publication (LWC@bayard-us.com, 800.321.0411).
- ◆ Learn what's new in the world-wide Catholic community by visiting www.cathnewsusa.com/, a service of Paulist Press.
- ◆ Seek out an opportunity to visit the children's unit in a local hospital to read a child a book that would bring him/her hope and joy.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The leader invites the community to a time of quiet. After a minute of silence, the gospel of the week is re-read by a member of the community. Following the reading, the leader poses this question to the community: "What does Christ say to you/us in your hearing this gospel today?" The community pauses for a full five to seven minutes of prayerful attention to how Christ speaks to them in this gospel. After this time of silence, the leader invites

members simply to mention a word or two or a brief thought that captures what they hear Christ saying to them.

When the sharing is complete, a selection of instrumental music is played. The prayer then continues as follows.)

Leader: We are made new in Christ. His cross is our promise of new life.

(Members pair off and sign the palms of each others' hands with the sign of the cross.)

Leader: Be refreshed and renewed in Easter life.

(The leader sprinkles the members with water.)

Leader: Go in peace in the newness of Christ to live his new commandment of love.

All : Thanks be to God! Alleluia!

(Members exchange a sign of peace.)