

MAY 6/7, 2017

Fourth Sunday of Easter

1. Jesus says, “I came that they may have life, and have it to the full.” Good stewards are grateful for the gift of life and joyfully share their abundance with others.
2. Saint Peter plays a prominent leadership role in the first two readings, urging his listeners to be baptized and accept the gift of the Holy Spirit; and encouraging them to follow in the footsteps of Christ. We have just renewed our baptismal promises at Easter and the Holy Spirit dwells in us in a special way. Are we good stewards of those baptismal vows? Have we renewed our commitment to follow in Jesus footsteps? Have we opened our hearts to discern the will of God in our lives? Take some time to reflect on the importance of our baptismal renewal and our lives as disciples of the Lord.

OR In today’s first reading Peter tells his listeners that if they want to follow Jesus they must go against the world, to become what Christian stewards would consider “countercultural.” For stewards, being countercultural can consist of surprisingly small decisions – small acts of reorientation to remind them daily that in spite of their life situation, their citizenship, financial status, or color of their skin, they belong, through their baptism, to a new world order in Jesus Christ. Stewards understand that their daily choices should witness to his gospel, not to the trends, attitudes, or spending practices of our culture. Stewardship requires us to ask of our daily habits: “In light of the Gospel, is this important?”

3. ***“I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly.” (John 10:1-10)*** The care of sheep in the Holy Land and elsewhere has not changed in thousands of years. Whenever you see a sheep, you see a shepherd. Sheep have no natural defenses against predators, and might even die if not led to food and water. Sheep know the voice of their shepherds and shy from strangers. When possible, sheep are kept in a pen with a gate. Jesus compares Himself to a shepherd, and in today’s Gospel, to the gate. We are compared to the sheep, which is not very flattering. But in the relationship of shepherd and sheep, the function of the gate is important. Jesus, as true God and true man, is the source of all that we are, and have and will be. He is our provider, protector, and savior. It is our responsibility to know His voice and to respond with gratitude in generosity to others. We *pass through* Jesus to a more abundant life by imitating Him and by loving one another as He loved us.

MAY 13/14, 2017

Fifth Sunday of Easter

1. "Those who have faith in Me will do the works I do, and far greater than these," Jesus tells His disciples. That's quite an assignment for us as Christian stewards!
2. In the reading from the Acts of the Apostles we see how the first community of Christians gathered together to discern and resolve how to care for each others' needs. As good stewards of the sisters and brothers who gather around the Eucharistic table, the community of faith selected those among them who were to ensure that no one was neglected. How do we ensure that those who might be perceived to be the least of our brothers and sisters are not left alone and neglected?

OR In the first letter of Peter, we are taught that God made us and chose us to reveal to the world who he is. Christian stewards understand that they do not live for themselves. They live to be stewards of Christ's presence within them, and to make his presence known to others. They do it at mass. They do it in faith-sharing groups. They do it at work. And they do it daily in a thousand different ways; and where they express their love for God and others in a manner that suites their situation and personality. Name for yourself some ways this week you will make Christ's presence known to others.

3. ***Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me.*** (John 14:1-12) At his last supper with his disciples, Jesus washed their feet and said, "*I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.*" Then, "*I give you a new commandment: Love one another; as I have loved you, so you should also love one another.*" He was teaching them the essential beliefs of a Eucharistic people in a Triune God. After supper he spent several hours in agonizing prayer. He was then cruelly betrayed, unjustly arrested, brutally tortured, savagely crucified, and hurriedly buried. But he rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples and said, "*Peace be with you!*" A week later, he appeared again and said, "*Peace be with you!*" His message was mysterious but simple. Do not be troubled; if you believe in God, believe in me. If you love one another as I have loved you and do for others what I have done for you, my peace will be with you and you will do the works I do, and even greater. How do we *imitate Jesus*? What have we *done for others*? Is the *Peace of Jesus with us*?

MAY 20/21, 2017

Sixth Sunday of Easter

1. Those who obey the commandments, Jesus says in today's Gospel, are the ones who really love Him. Does my stewardship reflect my love for Jesus?
2. Philip understood well Jesus' words: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." We learn of Philip's devotion to prayer, evangelizing and healing in the area of Samaria; made up of communities that would not be very receptive to the followers of Jesus. Philip is a model steward, living his discipleship day by day in the Lord without being obstructed by feelings of what cost his actions might entail. Good stewards summon the courage to proclaim the Lord and to serve Him by ministering to others. As an Easter people, eager to rejoice in the Lord, it is important to reflect on how we are living out our own commitment to discipleship.
OR In today's gospel we go back in time to listen to Jesus as he gives instructions at the Last Supper. His word speaks to all of us as he is preparing us to be sent out into the world to proclaim his Good News. The gift of the Holy Spirit is poured out into the entire community of faith to do this work, not just a few. No one is to be excluded. Are we inclusive of everyone in our community? Are there those we choose to exclude because we don't like them? In the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, what do we intend to do about it?
3. **"... I will ask my Father and He will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth..." (John 14:15-21)** Today's Gospel continues with the Last Supper Discourse. Jesus leaves no room for ambiguity: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." For his part, Jesus promises, "I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees him nor knows him." Our God created us, keeps us in existence, lived like us, died for us, rose from the dead as our guarantee of eternal life, and is with us always. As the popular song proclaims, *Our God is an Awesome God. He reigns from Heaven above, with wisdom, power, and might. Our God is an awesome God.* How can we respond to such an *Awesome God*? Our response is to acknowledge, accept, develop, and use all that God created us to be *for our own benefit and enjoyment and the enjoyment of others*. If we listen carefully, we will be able to hear Jesus shout, "That is awesome!"

May 27/28, 2017

Seventh Sunday of Easter

1. In today's Gospel, Jesus prays, "I have given You glory on earth by finishing the work You gave Me to do." Good stewards follow His example by using their time and talent for the glory of God.

OR – ASCENSION – Jesus ascended into heaven, blessing His disciples and promising that they would soon receive the power of the Holy Spirit. We who have received that promised gift of the Spirit are now empowered to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth – to use our time and talents to spread the good news of salvation.

2. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, his prayer was for his followers; those whom he left behind to be "in the world." The Christian steward's consolation and hope is that Christ is with us, ministering to us, journeying with us, sharing our burdens and rejoicing in our joys. Christ continues to call us; to draw us near to him. How do we respond?

OR In today's second reading, we hear it proclaimed that we are blessed if we share in the sufferings of Christ. What then does it mean to "share in His sufferings" in this context? Most of us do not live in a part of the world where we could be killed for being a follower of Jesus. But we could face or "suffer" mockery, ridicule and disapproval from others. Far too often, and for various reasons, those who profess faith in Christ act as though they were ashamed of him. But to act ashamed is the same as denial. Stewardship of the Good News are never ashamed to reveal their love for the Lord.

3. **"I glorify you on earth by accomplishing the work you gave me to do." (John 17:1-11)** Jesus spoke these words as part of his prayer to the Father for his disciples at the Last Supper just before he went to the Garden of Gethsemane. What was the **work** The Father had given Jesus to accomplish on earth to glorify Him? Part of the **work** was to be a living, breathing, walking, talking example and model to show us how we can accomplish the **work** the Father has given to each of **us**. For each of us that work is different. Each of us has received from God a vast array of talents, abilities, and gifts that are unique. Each of us has a unique life experience. It is precisely because we are unique that we must identify, accept, develop, and use all that God has created us to be. And we must share what God has given to us with others. When we meet God face-to-face will we be able to say, "I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the **work** you gave me to do?"

OR SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:16-20) The details and location of the Ascension are shrouded in mystery. St. Matthew tells of the commissioning of the disciples but does not describe an ascension. He concludes with Jesus' words, "And behold I am with you always, until the end of the age." Mark says simply that the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up to heaven." Luke places the event at Bethany and says Jesus raised his hands and blessed the disciples and "parted from them and was taken up to heaven." John makes no mention of an ascension. In the beginning of the Book of Acts, Luke suggests that Jesus and his apostles were in Jerusalem where he gave them some final instructions and adds, "as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight." One thing seems clear: Jesus was no longer visibly with his apostles but he left to them, and through them to us, the responsibility to spread his message and complete his mission. The question is: **How are we doing with that?** Someday, somewhere, Jesus will ask.