

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LECTIONARY #59

READING I Acts of the Apostles 1:12–14

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

After **Jesus** had been taken up to **heaven** the **apostles** returned to **Jerusalem** from the **mount** called **Olivet**, which is near **Jerusalem**, a **sabbath day's** journey away.

When they **entered** the **city** they went to the **upper room** where they were **staying**, **Peter** and **John** and **James** and **Andrew**, **Philip** and **Thomas**, **Bartholomew** and **Matthew**, **James** son of **Alphaeus**, **Simon** the **Zealot**, and **Judas** son of **James**.

All these devoted themselves with **one accord** to **prayer**, **together** with some **women**, and **Mary** the mother of **Jesus**, and his **brothers**.

Drawn from the opening chapter of Acts, this reading has something of the quality of "setting the story up," by describing the location and listing the characters.

Olivet = OL-ih-vet

Each word here has even emphasis.

Note the names, all of them men. These are the apostles; speak their names with some emphasis and reverence.

Bartholomew = bahr-THAHL-uh-myoo

Alphaeus = AL-fee-uhs

Note how "some women" are added at the end, including Mary the mother of Jesus.

READING I

Today's brief passage from Acts takes place between the Lord's ascension and the choosing of Matthias to replace Judas. If there is a theological message that Luke wishes to impart in these three verses it is that the apostles are resolved to preserve their unity and do so through shared prayer. Furthermore, Luke maintains the location of Jerusalem as their meeting place, placing it as the center of the emerging Church. Even though Jesus tells the apostles at the time of his ascension that they will be his witnesses to the

world, Jerusalem continues to be the epicenter for the apostles' mission.

Luke mentions the names of the apostles just as he did in the Gospel (Luke 6:12–16). The one name missing from the list this time is that of Judas. We will discover in a few verses that Peter deems it necessary that Judas be replaced so that their ministry may continue on. Mary is present with the apostles in the upper room as they devote themselves to prayer and discernment. It is important that Mary is present here at the beginning of the early Christian community, since she was present from

the beginning of Jesus' life and is a model of Christian discipleship. Also, Luke mentions that the "brothers" of Jesus were in the room together with women other than Mary. As we see in Luke's Gospel account, these women and men were likely to have been present throughout much of Christ's ministry (for example, see Luke 8:1–3, 19–21 and 23:49, 55). All in all, the overall theme of this passage is that the apostles are acting as one and are engaging in the work of discernment vis-à-vis their prayer.

For meditation and context:

This reading is in the imperative voice. Peter is offering encouraging advice to the recipients of this letter.

This claim sets up an unusual contrast. He seems to be saying, if you suffer because you've committed a vile crime, your suffering is your own, whereas if you suffer because of Christ, you glorify God.

Slight pause between "God" and "because."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 27:1, 4, 7-8 (13)

R. I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.
or
R. Alleluia.

The LORD is my light and my salvation;
 whom should I fear?

The LORD is my life's refuge;
 of whom should I be afraid?

Hear, O LORD, the sound of my call;
 have pity on me, and answer me.
 Of you my heart speaks; you my glance
 seeks.

One thing I ask of the LORD;
 this I seek:
 to dwell in the house of the LORD
 all the days of my life,
 that I may gaze on the loveliness
 of the LORD
 and contemplate his temple.

READING II 1 Peter 4:13-16

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Peter

Beloved:

Rejoice to the extent that you share in the sufferings of Christ,
so that when his glory is revealed
you may also rejoice exultantly.

If you are insulted for the name of Christ, blessed are you,
for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

But let no one among you be made to suffer
as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as an intriguer.

But whoever is made to suffer as a Christian should not
be ashamed

but glorify God because of the name.

READING II

The First Letter of Peter is addressed to Christians living in the "diaspora," namely cities in Asia Minor where Christians are very much in the minority. It is designed to help these churches embrace a lifestyle suitable to following the Christian way as opposed to following the values and the way of life of the pagan world that surrounds them. The author's theology of Christian suffering is very much in keeping with that of Paul's: as baptized Christians, they have been immersed into the Lord's suffering, death,

and resurrection (see Romans 6) which gives them strength to face their own persecution.

The letter calls blessed those who are willing to bear insult for Christ and those who endure suffering on his behalf. However, it also suggests that a Christian has no business seeking to suffer needlessly. The author describes several forms of suffering, such as killing and stealing, which may produce suffering that is duly justified; Christianity is only about the way of innocent suffering. The one who is made to suffer and the one who sacrifices the

desires of the flesh is worthy of God's glory and has life in the Spirit.

GOSPEL

Today's passage takes place near the end of Jesus' "farewell discourse," in which he seeks to strengthen his disciples for the task of remaining in him after he is gone from this world (John 14-17). Chapter 17 is a long prayer in which Jesus prays for himself to glorify the Father's name and for his disciples to persevere in the world. The eschatological tone of this prayer is revealed in the very first line of this prayer, as Jesus

This reading consists almost entirely of words Jesus is speaking directly to the Father. They are as confident as they are complex. Proclaim them with deference to their complexity.

Emphasis on "glorified," "glorify," and "glory."

Even emphasis on "do not pray."

Note the inclusive inversion, from "everything of mine is yours" to "everything of yours is mine."

GOSPEL John 17:1–11a

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said,

"Father, the hour has come.

Give **glory** to your **son**, so that your **son** may **glorify** you,
just as you gave him **authority** over **all people**,
so that your **son** may give eternal **life** to **all** you gave him.

Now **this** is eternal **life**,
that they should **know** you, the **only true God**,
and the **one** whom you **sent**, **Jesus Christ**.

I glorified you on earth

by **accomplishing** the work that you gave me to **do**.

Now **glorify** me, **Father**, with you,
with the **glory** that I **had** with you before the **world** began.

"I revealed your **name** to **those** whom you gave me **out**
of the **world**.

They **belonged** to you, and you gave them to me,
and they have **kept** your **word**.

Now they **know** that **everything** you gave me is **from** you,
because the **words** you gave to me I have **given** to **them**,
and they **accepted** them and truly **understood** that I **came**
from you,
and they have **believed** that you **sent** me.

I pray for them.

I do not pray for the **world** but for the **ones** you have **given** me,
because they are **yours**, and **everything** of **mine** is **yours**
and **everything** of **yours** is **mine**,
and I have been **glorified** in them.

And **now** I will **no longer be** in the **world**,
but **they** are in the world, while I am coming to **you**."

acknowledges that "the hour has come." In referring to his death, Jesus prays to be given the Father's glory in order to return glory to the Father. With this chapter's placement immediately before Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, the reader immediately connects this prayer with the courage and perseverance Jesus will exercise in accepting God's will that he suffer and die.

While the first part of the prayer concentrates on the glory that the cross bestows, Jesus soon turns to the future of the disciples. He makes clear that he did everything he could to reveal the Father to

those who believed. They are privileged recipients of divine revelation, and Jesus confidently states that they now know the connection between the Father and the Son. Knowing this relationship between Jesus and the Father places the disciples in a new relationship with the Father, as belonging to him and living for him through their continued commitment to Christ.

Near the end of this passage, Jesus states clearly that the prayer he utters is to benefit those who have believed in him. He does not pray for the world as a whole, because the world has not accepted him or

the Father's message that he reveals. While John's Gospel envisions a universal mission for the Word of God, the evangelist clearly recognizes that the world is also home to much that is evil and opposed to the reception of divine love. The strengthening of the disciples for the mission ahead is signaled by Jesus calling them the Father's possession (just as he is). Thus, those who believe in the Son and know that the Father has sent him into the world are also a sign of God's glory. S.W.