

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LECTIONARY #56

READING I Acts of the Apostles 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

When Peter entered, Cornelius met him

and, falling at his feet, paid him homage.

Peter, however, raised him up, saying,

"Get up. I myself am also a human being."

Then Peter proceeded to speak and said,

"In truth, I see that God shows no partiality.

Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly

is acceptable to him."

While Peter was still speaking these things,

the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word.

The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter

were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit

should have been poured out on the Gentiles also,

for they could hear them speaking in tongues and

glorifying God.

Then Peter responded,

"Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit even as we have?"

He ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Cornelius = kohn-NEEL-yuhns
Peter's humility corrects the misplaced
homage. Deliver with a smile; Peter is
not angry.

Emphasize "every." This is an important
message. God's saving love is not limited.

God works through your ministry to
transform those who hear the word.
Let the assembly hear the astonishment
in your voice. Can we identify a group
that would "astonish" us because they
too are included in God's embrace?

READING I

Today's readings focus on the consequences of the message of God's love for the growing community, as well as the expectations regarding attitudes and actions on the part of the individual believers.

The first reading, drawn from the story of the gentle Cornelius, harks back to Easter Sunday, when Peter's message to Cornelius' household was our first reading. If Peter's basic message of who Jesus was and what he did (Acts 10:37-43) was key for understanding the events of Easter, today's first reading is key for understanding an earth-

shaking development in the community's notion of who is invited into the life of Christ him. In the second scene, Peter moves beyond the insights from his earlier vision from Cornelius' story focus our attention on the message's transforming effect.

In the first scene, Peter enters Cornelius' home. Although not included in this reading, we know both Cornelius and Peter had earlier experienced impelling

visions. Peter's vision had led him to understand that what God created must not be declared unclean. Cornelius, described as someone with devout faith in God, has a vision directing him to send for Peter, leading to God. Meanwhile, Peter's circumcised

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4 (2b)

R. The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

or
R. Alleluia.

Sing to the Lord a new song,
for he has done wondrous deeds;

his right hand has won victory for him,
his holy arm.

The Lord has made his salvation known:
in the sight of the nations he has revealed

his justice.

He has remembered his kindness and his
faithfulness
toward the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation by our God.
Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands;
break into song; sing praise.

READING II 1 John 4:7-10

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John

Beloved, let us love one another,

because love is of God,

everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.

Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.
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.

In this is love:

not that we have loved God, but that he loved us
and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.

For meditation and context:

Beloved = bee-LUHV-uhd or buh-LUHV-uhd
Address the assembly with the tenderness
"Beloved" implies.

"Knowing" is not about knowledge, it is

about relationship and encountering God.

Contemplate the enormity of what God

did for us. Practice giving this verse the

reverence it deserves.

companions are amazed that God also
chooses the Gentiles. All that remains is for
the community to ratify God's decision ritu-
ally through the sacrament of baptism.

READING II

If the first reading reveals
the unbounded nature of

God's love to all people, the second reading

develops the community's inner command-

ment to love. Last week, 1 John emphasized

the fruitfulness of love and we connected it

to the gospel's image of the fruitful branch.

This week, 1 John focuses on love's origins,
how it is revealed, and what it consists of.

And again, it provides insight into the
Gospel.
The reading begins with the affirma-
tion that love (like truth, light, and life) is
from God. This is followed by the observa-
tion that people come to know God and
belong to him through love; without love,
we can't know or belong to God. The sec-
ond half of the reading turns to the way the
love of God reveals God's self to us and pro-
vides a way for us to know and belong to
him. To understand better the core of this
message, the phrase "in this way the love
of God was revealed to us" can be read as
"in this way the love of God was revealed
in us." This more nuanced reading empha-
sizes the divine indwelling, "that we might
have life through him." Our understanding
of God's love in us is further developed
when the author points to the incarnation;
although divine love has always existed, it
was revealed at the incarnation of the Son.
Finally, the text concludes that true love is
God's self-giving love for us, which is
expressed in God's sending of the Son, who
is "expiation for our sins." These emphases
will be repeated in today's Gospel.

GOSPEL John 15:9-17

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

Jesus said to his disciples:

“As the Father loves me, so I also love you.

Remain in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments

and remain in his love.

“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you

and your joy might be complete.

This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.

No one has greater love than this,

to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you.

I no longer call you slaves,

because a slave does not know what his master is doing.

I have called you friends,

because I have told you everything I have heard from

my Father.

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you

and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may

give you.

This I command you: love one another.”

The back-and-forth comparisons will be more easily grasped if you practice the parallel expressions. “Love” is repeated nine

times. Three relationships are established: God’s love for Jesus, Jesus’ love for us, our love for others.

Jesus showed us, not just told us about, his love. It is God’s love that makes it possible for us to receive and to give love in return.

Look out at the assembly, as you are able, throughout these last lines to help the congregation hear Jesus speaking these words to us today.

GOSPEL

Whereas today’s first reading recalls a remarkable transformation in the early community to be open to all who love God and the second reading develops the central role that love plays as the community’s identity, the Gospel combines both ideas. As it is tied to the image of the vine and branches from last Sunday, today’s Gospel encourages the transformed community, rooted in love, to remain in Jesus’ love and be fruitful in that love. Offering his relationship with the Father as the model, Jesus encourages his

disciples to remain in his love and to keep his commandments so as to know the fullness of joy. This opening reflection then leads Jesus to his central argument that is book-ended between verses 12 and 17, which are repetitions of Jesus’ command to “love one another as I love you.” Surrounded by this command to love, Jesus describes the way the disciples have been transformed by divine love. First, they have acquired a new status: they are no longer “slaves,” but rather friends. This new status enables them to love as Jesus loved, by washing one another’s feet and even by laying down their lives for others (see John 13:1–38). Second, this transformed status comes not from an act of will or effort on their part but rather because Jesus loved and chose them first. Thus, invited into partnership with the Father and the Son, they are to live out this love and keep returning to the source of that love for all their needs. Reflecting also on the insights of today’s second reading, we can say, then, that through our actions as Christians, God’s love is revealed in us. S.L.