

Monastery of Christ in the Desert
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5th Sunday of Easter-2010
Cycle C
2010

FIRST READING

Acts of the Apostles 14:21-27 After Paul and Barnabas had proclaimed the good news to that city and made a considerable number of disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch. They strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith, saying, "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." They appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith. Then they traveled through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia. After proclaiming the word at Perga they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now accomplished. And when they arrived, they called the church together and reported what God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

SECOND READING

Revelation 21:1-5a Then I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them as their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, for the old order has passed away." The One who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."

GOSPEL Cycle C

John 13:31-33a, 34-35 When Judas had left them, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and God will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

My sisters and brothers in Christ,

As I have loved you, so you also should love one another! In our hearts, we know that is impossible to us! Yet with the grace of God and faith in the Lord Jesus, this type of love becomes possible to us. Such love! As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.

It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God—this saying from the Acts of the Apostles speaks to the same reality. Without the grace of God and faith in the Lord Jesus, we will not have the strength to undergo these many hardships.

Behold, I make all things new. The Book of Revelation tells us what happens to us if we have grace and believe: we are made new. Not only are we made new, everything around us is also made new because we begin to see with eyes of faith, to hear with ears of faith, to live with a new power which is the grace of God.

Why don't we Christians today seem as alive in the faith as were these early Christians? Why does Christianity so often seem weighed down with sin and failure? Why isn't the Church a shining example of Christian behavior? Why can't I seem to be entirely faithful to the Lord? Why doesn't my faith shine forth from me so strongly that others will know immediately the power of God at work within me?

These early Christians were not able to convert everyone. These early Christians also had followers who did not give all that they had to follow the Lord. These early Christians also had sexual misbehavior in their Christian communities.

So what is our faith about? It is about coming to the Lord Jesus and acknowledging that we are sinners, learning to live in that truth and learning how to let God's grace transform us. We ourselves, by ourselves, cannot build a Church for God any more than David was allowed to build a temple for the Lord. It is God who builds the Church. Our task is to be faithful, day after day, trying to live by faith and in grace. When we fail, we ask forgiveness and do not try to hide the truth.

Faith in Jesus Christ is not about success in this world. Faith in Jesus Christ is not about having a Church that is perfect in this world. Faith is about following and continue to follow as best we can. Faith is about relying on Jesus alone, even when we encounter sin and darkness.

My children, love one another. My children, pardon one another. My children, walk in the light of the Lord.