

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER— 18 MAY 2025



COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
constantly accomplish the Paschal Mystery within us,
that those you were pleased to make new in Holy Baptism
may, under your protective care, bear much fruit
and come to the joys of life eternal.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

READINGS AND REFLECTIONS

When he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, Martin Luther King said (in the language of the time):
Civilisation and violence are antithetical concepts. Negroes of the United States... have demonstrated that nonviolence is not sterile passivity, but a powerful moral force which makes for social transformation. Sooner or later all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace, and thereby transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. If this is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love...

I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word...

Today's readings speak of making the whole of creation new, and of a new commandment to love one another.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

14:21–27

Paul and Barnabas went back through Lystra and Iconium to Antioch. They put fresh heart into the disciples, encouraging them to persevere in the faith. 'We all have to experience many hardships' they said 'before we enter the kingdom of God.' In each of these churches they appointed elders, and with prayer and fasting they commended them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.

They passed through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia. Then after proclaiming the word at Perga they went down to Attalia and from there sailed for Antioch, where they had originally been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now completed.

On their arrival they assembled the church and gave an account of all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the pagans.

First Reading

This is the second half of the so-called first missionary journey of Paul. As described here in the reading, this return trip that Paul and Barnabas make is something like 1,000 kilometres, half on land in present day Turkey, and the remainder by sea across to Syria. Given the demands of travel at the time, one can understand Paul speaking of the hardships they all have to endure for the sake of God's kingdom.

Before they leave they appoint elders, local leaders. Even at this early date (c. 46-49 AD) structures are being put in place for the governance of Church communities.

Paul and Barnabas obviously think the endeavour has been worthwhile – they assemble the Church on their return and give witness to God's work in bringing the Gentiles to faith.

The reader will need to manage the pronunciation of the proper names – check the pronunciation guide at the end of the book.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 144:8–13

R. I will praise your name for ever,
my king and my God.
or

R. Alleluia.

The Lord is kind and full of compassion,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
How good is the Lord to all,
compassionate to all his creatures. **R.**

All your creatures shall thank you, O Lord,
and your friends shall repeat their blessing.
They shall speak of the glory of your reign
and declare your might, O God,
to make known to men your mighty deeds
and the glorious splendour of your reign. **R.**

Yours is an everlasting kingdom;
your rule lasts from age to age. **R.**

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 144/145 praises God's greatness. The first stanza is in the third person, the rest of this part of the psalm is addressed to God in the second person. Some of the phrases are very well known, but they should be sung or proclaimed with the freshness they deserve. The response is the first verse of the psalm.

The cantor/reader may find the uneven length of the verses a challenge in cuing the assembly for the response: four lines, six lines, two lines. Skilful intonation and eye contact will be required.

As they participate in this psalm, the assembly itself should find itself giving thanks and speaking of God's glory and might.

A reading from the book of the Apocalypse 21:1–5

I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice call from the throne, 'You see this city? Here God lives among men. He will make his home among them; they shall be his people, and he will be their God; his name is God-with-them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no more death, and no more mourning or sadness. The world of the past has gone.'

Then the One sitting on the throne spoke: 'Now I am making the whole of creation new'.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John 13:31–35

When Judas had gone Jesus said:

'Now has the Son of Man been glorified,
and in him God has been glorified.
If God has been glorified in him,
God will in turn glorify him in himself,
and will glorify him very soon.
My little children,
I shall not be with you much longer.
I give you a new commandment:
love one another;
just as I have loved you,
you also must love one another.
By this love you have for one another,
everyone will know that you are my disciples'.

Second Reading

In keeping with the festive spirit of the Easter season, the Lectionary selects passages from the Apocalypse that gleam with glory. This is one of them. In this dream, everything is made new. The world is transformed. The holy city of Jerusalem (at that time, recently destroyed) is made new and depicted as a bride for the risen Christ. It represents a transcendent and future reality when God will dwell among his people, making his home with us.

This glorious vision for the end of time is referenced in the final lines of the two Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation: our Eucharist holds out this promise:

Freed at last from the wound of corruption and made fully into a new creation, we shall sing to you with gladness the thanksgiving of Christ who lives for all eternity.

Bring us to share with [Mary and the saints and those who have died] the unending banquet of unity in a new heaven and a new earth, where the fullness of your peace will shine forth in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel

A new heaven and a new earth – indeed, the whole of creation made new. Now, as Jesus farewells his disciples and looks forward to his glorification by God, he gives them a new commandment: *love one another!*

Jesus' long farewell discourse and prayer (of which these are the opening lines) are the centre of John's account of the Last Supper. They are inspiring words but, as the first line demonstrates, they occur in the context of betrayal and with the foreboding of Jesus' violent death. Today we hear this simple command in a broken world, torn apart by war and hatred.

Over sixty years ago, Martin Luther King believed that this simple command to love could transform the world and make it new. A new heaven and a new earth where there is no more violence, racism or war, no more revenge, aggression or retaliation: this was his dream. We are not there yet. No doubt it will only come to fulfillment at the end of time when, with Christ, we are glorified and God is glorified in us. Easter is a time to live in hope.

BLESSING FOR EASTER

May God, who by the Resurrection of his Only Begotten Son
was pleased to confer on us
the gift of redemption and of adoption,
give us gladness by his blessing.

Amen.

May he, by whose redeeming work
we have received the gift of everlasting freedom,
make us heirs to an eternal inheritance.

Amen.

And may we, who have already risen with Christ
in Baptism through faith,
by living in a right manner on this earth,
be united with him in the homeland of heaven.

Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
come down on us and remain with us for ever.

Amen.

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Easter Time, Roman Missal p. 712)

An alternative translation of the scripture readings is given here from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This may be particularly useful for those in parishes which use the NRSV Lectionary.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

FIRST READING (NRSV)

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles 14:21–27

Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra,
then on to Iconium and Antioch.
There they strengthened the souls of the disciples
and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying,
“It is through many persecutions
that we must enter the kingdom of God.”
And after they had appointed elders for them in each church,
with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord
in whom they had come to believe.

Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia.
When they had spoken the word in Perga,
they went down to Attalia.
From there they sailed back to Antioch,
where they had been commended to the grace of God
for the work that they had completed.

When they arrived, they called the church together
and related all that God had done with them,
and how he had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (NRSV)

Psalm 145.8-9, 10-11, 12-13 (R.1)

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

or:

R. Alleluia! (*Two or three times*)

The Lord is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
The Lord is good to all,
and his compassion is over all that he has made. **R.**

All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,
and all your faithful shall bless you.
They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom,
and tell of your power. **R.**

To make known to all people your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations. **R.**

SECOND READING (NRSV)

A reading from the book of Revelation 21:1–5

Then I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth;
for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,
and the sea was no more.

And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
“See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them as their God;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away.”
And the one who was seated on the throne said,
“See, I am making all things new.”

GOSPEL (NRSV)

A reading from the holy gospel according to John 13:1, 31–35

Before the festival of the Passover,
Jesus knew that his hour had come
to depart from this world and go to the Father.
Having loved his own who were in the world,
he loved them to the end.

During the supper, when Judas had gone out, Jesus said,
“Now the Son of Man has been glorified,
and God has been glorified in him.
If God has been glorified in him,
God will also glorify him in himself
and will glorify him at once.

Little children, I am with you only a little longer.
I give you a new commandment,
that you love one another.
Just as I have loved you,
you also should love one another.
By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,
if you have love for one another.”