

## FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Year C: Acts 14:21-27; Ps 145; Rev 21:1-5a; Jn 13:31-33a, 34-35

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During this lengthy Easter season in the Church, when we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ and His victory over sin and death, the Church turns back to consider again, in the light of the Resurrection, some of the things Christ said *before* He was put to death. In today's Gospel, we recall what Christ said at the Last Supper, just after Judas left to betray Him. "*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.'*"

Some might think this was an odd thing for Jesus to say right after He knew He would be betrayed. Some might ask: How was Christ glorified by being betrayed? What glory is there in being betrayed? Isn't betrayal a tragic and painful experience that leaves us feeling insulted and hurt, rather than feeling honored? How could Christ have been glorified by the betrayal of Judas?

Well, first, Jesus knew that the betrayal of Judas would cause His death and Resurrection, and He knew that He *would* be glorified when He rose from the dead. So, Christ knew that Judas was putting in motion the events that would ultimately lead to His glory after He rose from the dead. But, I think there was another message for all of us in these mysterious words of Christ. After Judas left, Jesus said, "*Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.*"

Jesus knew, of course, what Judas was about to do. But Jesus also knew that He loved Judas nonetheless, in spite of what he was about to do. Jesus knew that He was not going to prevent Judas from betraying Him, and that He would not retaliate against Judas or punish Him. Instead, Jesus would triumph over the temptation to retaliate and persevere in His mission to love the world by offering His life for the world. Jesus knew that He would persevere in loving the world, in spite of this tragic act of betrayal, and He knew that God measures glory by our ability to love. He knew that it is glorious when a soul continues to love, in spite of difficult or painful circumstances. This is what is glorious in God's eyes, and this is why Jesus said, "*Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.*"

After Jesus said this, He also told the Apostles at the Last Supper, “*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.*” They realized later that one way Christ had loved them was by persevering in love, even when He was betrayed, and by resisting the temptations to retaliate or punish. They realized later that Christ had loved them, and all of us, by forgiving their sins and by absorbing their insults when they abandoned Him on the Cross. Christ kept loving them no matter what they did. No matter how many times they failed to be faithful, Christ kept loving them. And He told them, “*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.*”

So, it’s supposed to be our love for others that identifies us as Christians, as people who believe in Christ and follow Him. Sometimes loving others as God desires requires us to persevere and overcome inconveniences, annoyances and frustrations. Sometimes loving others as Christ did requires us to absorb and accept insults and hurts. It’s easy to love when others love us back. It’s more challenging to keep loving when our love is not returned and not appreciated. But that’s what Christ did, when He kept loving after Judas left to betray Him. In the first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, we heard Paul and Barnabas encourage the disciples of Christ to persevere in faith, and they told them, “*It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.*” They had learned that it is sometimes necessary to undergo hardship in order to love as Christ did.

So, this is the message for us from the Gospel for this Fifth Sunday of Easter. Whenever anyone perseveres in love it is glorious in God’s eyes. Whether it’s loving a spouse, in spite of his or her faults, or loving a child, or even a parent, in spite of the hurt they have caused, or loving a friend, in spite of betrayal, the decision to keep loving is glorious in God’s eyes. And whenever anyone perseveres in love in spite of hardship, there is also great glory in God’s eyes. Those who care for others – whether children, or the elderly, or those with special needs – and who do so quietly and behind the scenes, without fanfare or recognition, they are glorious in God’s eyes, because they imitate the love of Christ that redeemed the world. Persevering love – that’s what we’re all called to have, so that the world will know that we are followers of Christ. Jesus said, “*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.*”