

## The New Commandment (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year C)

### Acts 14:21-27—Paul Returns to the Church in Antioch

1. Evangelization: preaching the “good news” or “gospel” (14:21)
  - a. Evangelization: making “many disciples” (14:21)
  - b. Exhortation: “exhorting them to continue in the faith” (14:22)
  - c. Suffering: “through many tribulations” we enter “the kingdom of God” (14:22)
2. Ordination: they “appointed elders (Greek *presbyteroi*)” in every “church” (14:23)
3. Gentiles: “a door of faith” was opened to “the Gentiles” (14:27)

### Psalm 145—I Will Praise Your Name Forever

1. Kingdom: the Lord’s people “speak of the glory of thy kingdom” (v. 11)

### Revelation 21:1-5—The New Heavens and the New Earth

1. New Creation: John sees “a new heavens and a new earth” (21:1)

### John 13:31-33, 34-35—The New Commandment

1. Last Supper: context—Judas has just departed from the supper (John 13:1-31)
2. Glorification = Crucifixion and Resurrection (cf. 13:33)
3. New Commandment: Jesus, like God, gives commandments (13:34)
  - a. “New Commandment” (Greek *entolē kainē*)
  - b. “Love (Greek *agapaō*) one another”
  - c. Sacrificial Love: “as I have loved you”
4. Witness: by this “all” will know you are my “disciples” (Greek *mathētēs*) (13:35)

### The Living Tradition

Cyril of Alexandria: He [Jesus] plainly indicates the novelty involved in his command here—and the extent to which the love he enjoins here surpasses the old idea of mutual love [cf. Deut 6:5]—*by adding the words “Even as I have loved you, you also should love one another...”* The law of Moses mandated the necessity of loving our brothers as ourselves, yet our Lord Jesus the Christ loved us far more than he loved himself. Otherwise, he would have never... undergone for our sake the exceptional bitterness of his death in the flesh... It was indeed something new for love to go as far as that! Christ commands us to love as he did, pursuing neither reputation, wealth or anything else before love of our brothers and sisters. *If need be, we even need to be prepared to face death for our neighbor’s salvation as our Savior’s blessed disciples did, as well as those who followed in their footsteps.* To them the salvation of others mattered more than their own lives, and they were ready to do anything or suffer anything to save souls that were perishing. (Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 9; trans. in Elowsky, ACCS, p. 114)

John Chrysostom: Passing over the miracles that they were to perform, he makes love the distinguishing mark of his followers.... *Miracles do not attract unbelievers as much as the way you live your life.* And nothing brings about a proper life as much as love. (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, 72.5; trans. NPNF)

## Questions for Discussion and Reflection (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year C)

1. What did “evangelization” entail in the early Church?

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2. What is “new” about the “new commandment” given by Jesus to the disciples during the Last Supper?

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3. What does Jesus mean when he says that people will know that we are his “disciples” by the way we “love”?

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### For Further Study

1. Francis Martin and William M. Wright IV, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 240-42.
2. Joel C. Elowsky, *John* (2 vols.; Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament IV; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 2.112-15.