The Mass Readings Explained

Jesus' Commandment: Love One Another
(6th Sunday of Easter, Year B)

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48—The Holy Spirit Comes Upon the Gentiles
1. Cornelius: "Centurion" of the "Italian cohort" (10:1)
    a. Love of God: "Devout man who *feared God* with all his household"
    b. Love of Neighbor: "gave alms liberally to the people"
    c. Prayer: "who prayed constantly to God" (10:2)
2. Cornelius' Vision: "Your prayers and alms have ascended… before God" (10:4)
    a. Angel: tells him to go and find Simon Peter (10:3-23)
    b. Caesarea: Cornelius finally encounters Peter here (10:24)
3. Peter Encounters Cornelius:
    a. Worship: he "worships" (Greek *proskyneō*) Peter! (10:25-26; cf. Pagans)
    b. Peter's Vision: "God has shown me…" no man is "unclean" (10:28)
4. God and the Gentiles (10:34-35)
    a. Universality: "God shows no partiality"
    b. Faith: "In every nation anyone who *fears him*"
    c. Works: "and *does what is right* is acceptable"
5. The New Pentecost (for Gentiles):
    a. New Pentecost: "the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word" (10:44)
    b. Tongues: they heard them "speaking in Tongues" (10:46)
    c. Baptism: "Can anyone forbid water for baptizing these people…?" (10:47)

Psalm 98—The Lord Has Revealed His Salvation to the Nations
1. The Lord has "revealed his vindication" in "the sight of the nations (Hb *goyim*)" (98:2)

1 John 4:7-10—God is Love
1. "God is love" (Greek *agapē*) (1 John 4:8; cf. Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*)

John 15:9-17—Love One Another as I Have Loved You
1. Jesus' Directive: "Abide/remain in my love" (15:9); How do we do that?
2. Obedience: "if you *keep my commandments*, you will abide in my love" (10:10)
3. Joy: is the *fruit* of obedience (15:11) (contrast the Devil; joy is the fruit of *license*!)
4. Jesus' Commandment: "love one another as I have loved you" (15:12)
5. "Love": "greater love (Gk *agapē*) has no man than to lay down his life" (15:13)
6. Friends vs. Servants: 'you are my friends if you do what I command you" (15:14)
7. Fruit: "go and bear fruit" that will "abide/remain" (15:16)

The *Catechism*: Salvation Outside the Church (Part 2)
"*Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—those*

too may achieve eternal salvation." "Although in ways known to himself God can lead those who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of the Gospel, to that faith without which it is impossible to please him, the Church still has the obligation and also the sacred right to evangelize all men." (*Lumen Gentium* 16; *Ad Gentes* 7; cf. CCC 847-48)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (6th Sunday of Easter, Year B)

1. Why is the gift of the Holy Spirit to Cornelius and his companions such a significant event in the history of the Church (Acts 10)?

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2. Jesus says that "complete joy" is the fruit of obedience to his commandments? (John 15:11). Do you think of "joy" as the fruit of obedience? If so, why? If not, why not?

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3. What do you make of the Church's teaching that it is "possible" for someone to be saved if "through no fault of their own" they have never heard the Gospel but through "grace" strive to do God's will (CCC 847)? How might Cornelius be an early example of this idea?

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For Further Study

1. . Peter M. J. Stravinskas. *Salvation Outside the Church?* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2002). A concise, readable overview of the Church's teaching on the controversial question of whether there is any salvation "outside the church."
2. Joel C. Elowsky, *John* (2 vols.; Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament IV; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 2.158-170. A wonderful collection of ancient Christian interpretations of John's Gospel and the Good Shepherd discourse.