

## Sixth Sunday of Easter - Lectionary: 55

### Reading 1 [ACTS 8:5-8, 14-17](#)

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Christ to them. With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing. For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed people, and many paralyzed or crippled people were cured. There was great joy in that city. Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who went down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

**Responsorial Psalm** [PS 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16, 20](#) R. (1) Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

### Reading 2 [1 PT 3:15-18](#)

Beloved: Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the Spirit.

### Gospel [JN 14:15-21](#)

Jesus said to his disciples: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows him. But you know him, because he remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him."

On this Sixth Sunday of Easter, we're reminded not only of all the reasons for our hope but the need to share those reasons with others as well. As Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments". And what of those commandments, Jesus said, two can be considered the greatest, "*And one of them, a doctor of the Law, putting him to the test, asked him, 'Master, which is the great commandment in the Law?' Jesus said to him, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.' This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like it, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.*" (Matthew 22:35-40) There are all sorts of ways to love your neighbor, but the most important would be to love them by looking after their souls, and doing that by following the example of Philip in the first reading today, to give what you have received, to hand on what has been handed on to you. To share the Good News of salvation. To share the eternal truths.

In today's first reading Philip, one of the 7 Deacons, although he left Jerusalem after the martyrdom of Stephen, he isn't running scared... he is actively engaging in the mission they were given. Like Jesus before him, he preached and performed signs, he cast out unclean spirits and paved the way for his listeners to be baptized and to receive the Holy Spirit from the laying on of the hands of the Apostles who were sent to them.

As we listen to the account of Philip's work, we are being invited to reflect on our own Baptism and Confirmation, 2 of the 3 Sacraments of initiation. We are also being invited to pray for all of the people who have and will be receiving these Sacraments this Easter season. Having been cleansed in waters of baptism and united in the life of God, we have become temples of the Holy Spirit and receivers of the gifts which enable us to love God and keep the commandments. Baptism expels evil from us and gives us strength against evil influences.

In the rite of Baptism a prayer of exorcism and an anointing take place before the baptism to remind us that Baptism removes us from the dominion of Satan, a consequence of Original Sin: "Almighty and ever-living God, you sent your only Son into the world to cast out the power of Satan, spirit of evil, to rescue man from the kingdom of darkness, and bring him into the splendor of your kingdom of light...."

With the evil influences driven away by prayer the Priest also prays that the person receiving Baptism receive the Holy Spirit: "We pray for this person: set him free from original sin, make him a temple of your glory, and send your Holy Spirit to dwell with him. We ask this through Christ our Lord." After the Baptism, there is another anointing that represents a new temple of the Holy Spirit being consecrated. The sacrament of Confirmation completes this action and further empowers us to go out and share the Gospel with others. This sharing includes being ready to share the reasons for our hope.

New life in Christ involves giving others the opportunity to receive new life in Christ as well. We must be able to answer their questions which might arise because they have heard we are Christian, or they have seen us living our faith. It is not just what we explain, but how we explain it that lends credence to our message: gentleness and reverence. If we're mistreated as a result, we are consoled by the fact that we're imitating Christ in suffering for the sake of good. We have come to call this part of evangelization, apologetics. Just as those early Church Fathers did and all the saints down through time, we must all be able, according to our abilities, to know and explain the faith.

The love of God is the greatest reason for our hope, and the greatest way we can reciprocate that love is to obey Christ out of love. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments"