

7th Sunday of Easter

Today the liturgy reflects upon the antagonism that people of faith may face in this world, but more especially it reflects on love; love which is more powerful than hatred, because it comes to us from God.

Jesus reveals God's love for us by creating the Church: a community of people called and given grace to love God and one another.

Acts 1:15-17. 20-26

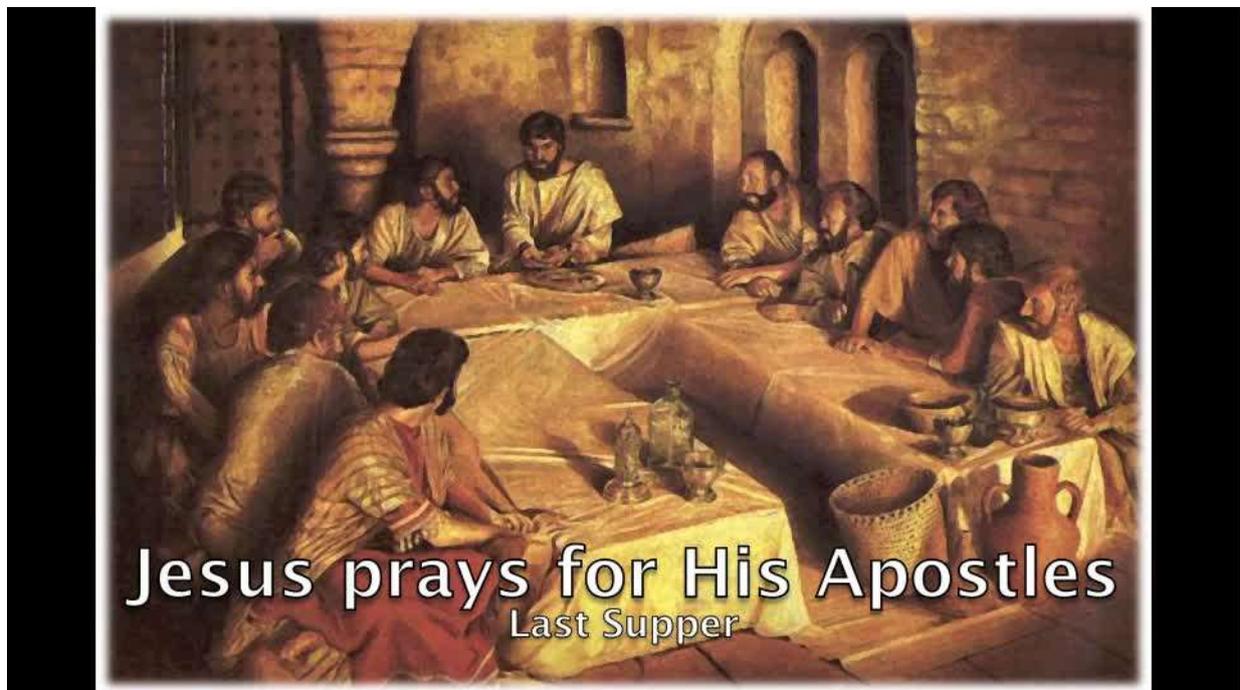
With discernment and prayer the apostles choose Matthias to replace Judas as a fellow apostle.

1 John 4:11-16

The heart of the Christian faith is love: God's love for us and our love for one another.

John 17:11-19

Jesus prays for the Church, for each of us to be one with him, to be filled with his joy; and for us to be protected from evil.



Reflection

"Father, glorify your Son"

There's a film called "Gladiator." It might not be everyone's cup of tea,

but it does at least introduce us to the emperor Marcus Aurelius. Richard Harris portrays him quite well: world-weary but essentially humane. More than any other emperor, Marcus Aurelius revealed something about himself. He wrote a personal journal - known as his "Meditations" - which we can still read today. In its pages, we find an emperor who is also a philosopher. This is philosophy in the old sense of being quasi-religious.

As you
SENT ME
into the world,



so I have
SENT THEM
into the world.



John 17:18, ESV

These "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius reveal an attractive human being; a man with an awareness of the transitory nature of things, and a genuine desire to be good. He is perhaps Roman paganism at its best. In one of the earlier scenes in the film, we see its hero, Maximus, enter the emperor's tent. Marcus is writing his journal, and suddenly asks: "Why are we here?". Maximus immediately replies "For the glory of Rome, Sire." Even today, we can easily associate glory with Roman power. Of all the ancient empires, Rome was probably the most conscious of its glory.

In today's Gospel, we are presented with a group of its humblest subjects, listening to the words of a rabbi from an obscure town in a distant Roman province. They have just finished a Passover meal in Jerusalem, and they hear Jesus speak about glory. What does he mean by this, and how does this glory compare with the glory that was Rome?

First, Jesus addresses God in a way that Marcus Aurelius never would. This is the tragedy of the noble pagan. Jesus calls God, "Father", and he asks his Father to "glorify"

him. Put these words in context. They are part of what is often called "The Priestly Prayer of Christ", the last words spoken before his arrest. This prayer is a prelude to his passion, death, and resurrection. We've got to try to understand glory as John understands it.

John's Gospel is in many ways the story of what Jesus has done for the Father. He has glorified him by doing the work given him: by revealing the truth about God, and by giving eternal life. The moment of that work's completion has come. Soon, Christ will proclaim that completion in his dying words: "It is accomplished". The Father has glorified the Son by demonstrating that Jesus is all that he claims to be. This he first did at Cana in Galilee. This he has done through the other miracles of Jesus. Now he will glorify the Son in a different way. In the resurrection, yes, but also in the very powerlessness of Christ's passion and death.

There, we believers recognise Jesus stripped to his essence. Before Pilate and the worldly power that Pilate represents, stands the one who is sent by God and who is truth itself. People will lift him up on the wood of the cross, not realising that they are raising up on high the source of all healing, as did once Moses in the desert. That's how the exaltation begins, the glory of Christ. In Jesus, God's glory is revealed in powerless and unconquerable love.



This gospel's application in our lives is already contained in the final prayer of Jesus. There, he speaks of himself as being glorified **in his disciples**. This is because, at last, they know that Jesus and his teaching do indeed come from the Father. In this, too, Jesus' work is accomplished. Now he sends them into an unredeemed world with the message of truth and eternal life. There are those in this world who will reject and hate the message, so much so that they are beyond the prayer even of the one who is about to die for them.

There's still a worldly power that still believes in transitory glory. There is a Prince of this world who hates the one on the cross. But ours is also a world filled with people rather like Marcus Aurelius, who have seen through the facade and seek something better.

The Spirit of God works in them and in us. The Feast of the Spirit is near. At this time of the Great Novena, the first Novena, let us join with Mary and the Apostles in prayer. Let us pray that we may be renewed as the courageous messengers of Christ. He will be glorified in our time in the measure that we become so.

NOVENA

This Sunday is part of the original novena, the nine days of prayer in the Upper Room between the fortieth day, Ascension Thursday, and the fiftieth day, Pentecost.

Let us join Our Lady and the Apostles and pray for the outpouring of the power of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify us, the church.

That gospel today is very appropriate as it is the prayer of Jesus that the disciples be consecrated in the truth, strengthened to face hatred in the world, and protected from the evil one.

“May they be one like us”.

In this beautiful line Jesus prays that his disciples might have the precious gift of inner unity after the model of the perfect unity of Jesus with the Father. This unity will be seen in unbroken fidelity to God; in harmony in our relationships with other people; and through inner serenity in our hearts.

“Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth”. To consecrate any object or person is to set it apart for God's service. The prayer of Jesus is that we, his disciples, would be so thoroughly dedicated to his word that we would be strengthened against hatred or persecution, and immune to the wiles of the evil one.

In times of pandemic, in times of rapid change and confusion, it is more necessary than ever to go back to the splendour of truth, revealed in the teaching of Jesus, which is a solid rock to act as a foundation for a house to withstand all storms.

