

FIRST READING: Acts of the Apostles 11:19-26

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles:

Those who had been scattered by the persecution that arose because of Stephen went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but Jews. There were some Cypriots and Cyrenians among them, however, who came to Antioch and began to speak to the Greeks as well, proclaiming the Lord Jesus. The hand of the Lord was with them and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. The news about them reached the ears of the Church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to go to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced and encouraged them all to remain faithful to the Lord in firmness of heart, for he was a good man, filled with the Holy Spirit and faith. And a large number of people was added to the Lord. Then he went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the Church and taught a large number of people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 87:1b-3, 4-5, 6-7

***All you nations, praise the Lord.***

His foundation upon the holy mountains the LORD loves: The gates of Zion, more than any dwelling of Jacob. Glorious things are said of you, O city of God!

***All you nations, praise the Lord.***

I tell of Egypt and Babylon among those who know the LORD; Of Philistia, Tyre, Ethiopia: "This man was born there." And of Zion they shall say: "One and all were born in her; And he who has established her is the Most High LORD."

***All you nations, praise the Lord.***

They shall note, when the peoples are enrolled: "This man was born there." And all shall sing, in their festive dance: "My home is within you."

***All you nations, praise the Lord.***

ALLELUIA John 10:27

GOSPEL: John 10:22-30

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to John:

The feast of the Dedication was taking place in Jerusalem. It was winter. And Jesus walked about in the temple area on the Portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you and you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify to me. But you do not believe, because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No

one can take them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

The Gospel of the Lord.

### **Reflection for the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of Easter**

Today's reading from Acts has linked Saul, once again to the death of Stephen. Instead of quashing the faith of Jesus, Saul's action helped it to spread beyond Palestinian borders into the lands of the Gentiles. The text also related that even though Barnabas preached only to Jews, outside of the homeland, the Gentiles became exposed to his preaching and faith in Jesus. The Holy Spirit turned a catastrophe into a cascade of hope and new life. The event of Stephen's death was a human tragedy but in the Spirit it was a gift of God. The way God can work is indeed a wonder. So many people had come to faith, Barnabas needed help. What was his response? Better call Saul.

The two bravest people, in the narrative so far have been Ananias, who took in the blind and helpless Saul upon his conversion and Barnabas, who sought Saul to help him. Was his conversion real? Could he be a spy, planted by the authorities to entrap the believers? That was a possibility. Their faith made it possible to trust Saul who proved himself, later, to be the real deal. I wonder, though, many of these people fled to these places to get away from the persecution that Saul wreaked. Were they afraid of him? How effective could this budding apostle be? This is a powerful story of the faith of Saul, yet to be Paul and the faith of the people to who Paul would serve for the rest of his life.

If no one comes to faith in Jesus unless the Father draws them, can we blame the folks who couldn't believe that Jesus is the Messiah of God? We hear this story from the perspective of our post Easter and Post Pentecost faith. We believe; today's audience does not. Do they have no hope of eternal life? How God works in God's own time and way is beyond human control. What it takes is the grace of God to have faith and God, apart from being Love is also a mystery that some times results in our wonderment and ambivalence. Jesus was, after all, asking them to change their religion. Could we?

We believe and therefore are firmly in God's embrace. There is no power greater than God's love. God won't let go of us either. God's love does not let sin or death separate us. Is that what Jesus means by being one? What can eternal life be? Any idea that we have of it falls short. God is infinite, eternal and unconditional. We are limited, moribund and have strings attached. We can only approach God by God's grace to do so. We can have glimpses of eternity in moments we don't ever expect and in surprising ways.

Jesus said several times, in John's gospel that he and the Father are one. How and why? John established the relationship in the gospel's prologue. They are the same stuff. We take this notion for granted by faith. There's more to it than theology and being. Jesus was also one in mind and heart. They had the same plan and the same love. Jesus followed perfectly his father's plan. Both worked together for our salvation. Jesus acted in God's name. After all Jesus is God too. It is both like and unlike a honey-do list at the same time and all connected in love.

We face all sorts of problems. We face them as best we can and as human as we are. The early believers in Jesus succeeded only because the Holy Spirit worked through them. That we gather as believers is testimony that this is true. Because of our faith in Jesus, we now have the possibility of full life in God. The same Holy Spirit works through, with and in us all. Jesus was talking about us in him.

May our lives reflect the Lord Jesus to all we meet and may we find Jesus reflected in them.

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