

Sixth Sunday of Easter

[Reading I: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17](#)

[Responsorial Psalm: 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16, 20](#)

[Reading II: 1 Peter 3:15-18](#)

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

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/051423.cfm>



The selection from the Acts of the Apostles introduces us to the ministry of Philip, one of those chosen in last week's reading, to assist in the distribution of food to the widows. Philip now goes to an estranged group, the Samaritans. The Samaritans were in centuries past, members of the Israelite community. After the conquest of the northern part of Israel by the Assyrians in 722 before Christ, most were deported to other areas of the Assyrian empire. The Assyrians then brought in other conquered people who inter-married with the few Israelites who remained. Their descendants became known as the Samaritans. They believed in one God but did not see the Jerusalem temple as important to their religious life. The Jewish people, from the tribe of Judah of the Israelites, did not see them as true members of the Israelite community because the Samaritans had inter-married with non-Israelites. Neither trusted the other.

Philip arrives, preaches about the Jewish messiah, and brings healings to the City of Samaria. They accept him and his message. Philip baptizes them. The reconnection of the Samaritans to the faith of what God was doing, was a sign of the coming of the reign of God. It was something that no one had done in over seven hundred years. It was the work of God and a continuation of the work of Jesus by the Church.

The arrival of Peter and John shows that this work was united with the Big Church which was still centered in Jerusalem. Peter and John, who first went to the tomb to confirm what had been told the Apostles by the women, are now those who go to Samaria to confirm that this is the work of God. They pray with the Samaritans and the Holy Spirit comes upon them just as the Spirit came on the church in Jerusalem. This is truly the work of God.

This passage highlights that God works in all the church in the same way, the importance of working together, and of Christian Unity. It is also used as the background for the practice of the bishop confirming children who were baptized as infants. That they belong not just to a parish or congregation but to the whole church.

The First Letter of Peter offers a reality check for those who began to focus on their being "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own." It does not mean life will be easy, you will be wealthy, or that everything will go your way. Look at Jesus, God's beloved Son. What happened to him? Christ suffered and you will suffer; Christ was rejected, and you will be rejected; Christ died, and you will die. If you do not want the reality of being a child of God, then being a Christian is not what you thought it would be. Early Christians began suffering and were confused. If Jesus is the Messiah, didn't he do all the suffering?

The Gospel passage continues the discourse of Jesus with Philip about his request to see the Father. Jesus also assures them that he will not leave them orphaned. When Jesus dies, he will send the Spirit, the Spirit who dwelt in him at the Baptism by John, will be the Spirit that will dwell in them and us. Thus, the same Spirit that was working in Jesus will be

working in them and us. When Jesus goes, the Spirit will come, and Jesus will be with us. It will be just like when Jesus was physically present.

It introduces the mystery of the indwelling of God. Jesus dwells in God and the Spirit dwells in Jesus. When we allow the Spirit to dwell in us, we dwell in Jesus and thus in the Father. John uses a Semitic literary device to convey the thought. At the beginning of the passage Jesus states, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." It is not a threat, but an expression of what love means. Toward the end of the passage, he flips the words, "Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me."

When the "World" (society) does not see Jesus, we will see Jesus because the same works will be done by those who keep the commandments of Jesus. Jesus commanded that we love one another, pray for those who persecute us, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and care for the sick. Then you will see Christ in the actions of the Body of Christ.

### **Themes**

Persecution of Christians  
Commandments of Jesus

Work of the Holy Spirit  
Witnessing the Good News

### **Reflection Questions:**

What are some signs of the Spirit at work in the world or the church?

How does the Catholic Church in various parts of the world, express the unity that exists?

When you face a challenge or suffering, do you think God has abandoned you?

How can we look to Christ to find an example of how to face suffering?

What other actions fulfill the commands of Christ?

### **Prayer Suggestions:**

For the Church: that we may grow in our awareness that Christ is in us, and we are in Christ because the Holy Spirit dwells in us

For the renewal of God's Spirit in our hearts: that God will stir up into a flame the gift of the Spirit so that we may build up the Body of Christ and bring forth God's reign in the world

For courage to live one's mission: that God will empower each of us to follow the call that God has placed in our hearts and to use our gifts for God's glory and the service of one another

For the unity of all Christians: that the Spirit of God will heal the misunderstandings and wounds in the Body of Christ

### **Novena:**

A novena is nine days of prayer following the example of the Apostles who prayed for the Spirit during the days between the Ascension and Pentecost. It is an ancient tradition in the church for everyone to pray for a renewal of the Spirit from next Friday until Pentecost Sunday, 10 days later. You can pray however you like. Here is one sample of music and prayer suggestions to guide you through the days. (It was composed for the pandemic but still is valuable today.)

<https://www.danschuttemusic.com/wordpressstore/pentecost-novena/>