

Missionary Commentary

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 18, 2025

Sunday Readings

Acts 14:21-27

Psalm 145:8-13

Revelation 21:1-5a

John 13:31-33a, 34-35

[USCCB Link to the Readings](#)

Fierce Storms, Early Spring

When is it time to move on?

As in the days of St. Paul, establishing local leadership in newly founded Christian communities is always an important step to take early on, in the mission of the Church. This step often requires of us “ad gentes” missionaries today, arriving from foreign countries to accompany or even establish the local Church, the humility to knowing when to move on, rather than to cling to leadership positions ourselves.

Sometimes, an unfriendly, authoritarian regime rises up in the countries we live and work in, and force us to leave before we had planned. Ironically, this helped out the local Church by spurring it to grow up quickly, and to take on the reins of leadership out of necessity, as was the case in China, Myanmar and other areas of the world.

The Pinochet dictatorship in Chile (1973-1990) expelled many priests, sisters and brothers during its reign of oppression and fear, including three of our Columban priests, accused of being threats to the “national security” of the nation by living in poor areas and organizing communities in neighborhoods that were often seen as harboring enemies of the regime.

Father Brian McMahon and Father Brendan Forde built their own simple house, with local help, and lived the lifestyle of the working class—including using a washboard for washing their clothes, cardboard for insulating their wooden walls, and local food markets. They also joined what few local organizations were tolerated by the regime in the area, like a soccer club. In 1983, they were



Left to right, Fathers McMahon, McGillicuddy, and Ford.

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violently expelled, along with Father Desmond McGillicuddy of the Mill Hill Fathers.



However, the people in the young community they left behind formed their own leadership and learned to take Jesus as their model--laying down their lives for one another, the “new” commandment that Jesus gave his disciples, and remembering the examples of Father Brian and Father Brendan.

Iglesia Estrella sur Pudahuel

Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading — Acts 14:21-27 — Luke draws our attention here to the process by which early Christian communities came into being and were nurtured: through visitation by pastors, appeals to loyalty, and the establishment of local leadership.

Responsorial Psalm—Psalm 145:8-13 — This hymn of praise celebrates the kingdom of God in the years after Israel’s return from exile in Babylon and freedom from oppression. We can hear the Chosen People’s gratitude expressed for a stable, everlasting kingdom, and a renewed relationship with God.

Second Reading — Revelation 21:1-5a — Towards the end of the Book of Revelation, written in the apocalyptic style during a time of intense persecution of the early Church, we look to a future of a transformed heaven and earth, both gift from God and involving human work.

Gospel —John 13:31-33a, 34-35 — The ‘farewell discourses’ of Jesus at the Last Supper begin with these verses, and go on for several chapters, in John’s Gospel. What is “new” is to follow Jesus’ example of radical love for others, laying down his life for us.

*Notes and commentary by Fr. Bob Mosher,
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