

Missionary Commentary

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 25, 2025

Sunday Readings

Acts 15:1-2, 22-29

Psalms 67:2-8

Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23

John 14:23-29

[USCCB Link to the Readings](#)

Francis, A Vatican II Pope

During the entire Easter season the first reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles, narrating the marvelous missionary action of the early Church. In addition, this year our Easter season was filled with numerous contemporary Church events: the death of one pope and the election of another. Truly, the Holy Spirit remains marvelously active in our faith community today.

A Consequential Papacy. Allow that this reflection would highlight some significant items from the life of our beloved Pope Francis, who guided the Church for just over twelve years (2013-2025). As the 266th pope, Francis has garnered many “firsts.” He is the first pope to take the name “Francis” in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi. He is the first pope coming from the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and the first pope from the Americas.

Francis, clearly a “people’s pope,” visited at least 60 states and territories. In addition, he is the first pope to visit the Arabian Peninsula, birthplace of Islam. Francis led the Church of 1.4 billion (over one-sixth of the world’s population). He has canonized over 900 saints, including Mother Teresa of Calcutta and martyred Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero.

Council Affirmation. However, one remarkable “achievement” which is *not* included in these many statistics is that during his pontificate, Pope Francis canonized *three* popes: John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II. It is significant that all these three “pope-saints” were active participants in Vatican II. Thus, one could validly assert that Pope Francis has not simply canonized three “Vatican II Popes”; *he has also canonized the legacy of the Second Vatican Council.* Truly, he can be called a “Vatican II Pope.”

Remarkably, Pope Francis is the first pope in six decades who did *not* personally participate in Vatican II. He had his formation during the Council, having entered the Jesuits in 1958, the same year that Pope John XXIII, the “Father of Vatican II,” became pope; he was ordained in 1969, soon after the Council concluded. With Francis, the Council is almost as alive today as it was sixty years ago when it concluded in 1965.

Foundational Principles. First, Vatican II gave attention to *collegiality*, the principle that all bishops, together with the pope, have responsibility for the Church. Francis further expanded this vision with his emphasis on *synodality*, which is a readiness to enter into dynamic, respectful, and prayerful speaking, listening, and dialoguing, following the Holy Spirit’s lead.

A second Council emphasis focuses on the *local church*. This vision was highlighted in the Council document on missionary activity, *Ad Gentes*. In short, the “center of action” is the local church; this principle extends to liturgy, evangelization, episcopal conferences, leadership, as well as numerous other areas of Christian life.

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Additional Guidelines. Vatican II emphasized the importance of *dialogue*, a broad principle emphasizing that the Church is to be a community of dialogue, a truly listening Church, hearing voices from within the Church, from other Christians, from people of other faiths, and from the world at large.

A fourth principle is captured by the popular expression “servant-leadership.” We appreciate Pope Francis’ profound sensitivity and deep compassion; we rejoice in heartfelt gratitude for the marvelous gift of *Franciscus*!

Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading — Acts 15:1-2, 22-29

On all days of the Easter, we read in the Acts of the Apostles of the impact of the risen Lord on the disciples of the early Christian community. In today’s reading, we hear about a difficult situation confronting the early Church: how to handle the non-Jewish converts to the faith. The official decision is that Christianity is a separate religion from Judaism.

Responsorial Psalm — Psalm 67:2-8

This psalm is a kind of “song of thanksgiving.” It celebrates the gratitude of the Gentiles (non-Jews) for the decision that was reached about the relationship between Christianity and Judaism.

Second Reading — Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23

The Book of Revelation is highly symbolic; it is a type of writing called apocalypse. Here John, the author, gives us an inspiring, resplendent vision of the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a vision of the Church triumphant, built upon the twelve apostles.

Gospel — John 10:27-30

As the Ascension and Pentecost approach, we read today in the Fourth Gospel from the Lord’s Farewell Discourse at the Last Supper. We hear a tender farewell. Yes, the disciples’ friend and master is leaving, but they are promised peace and the ongoing presence and instruction of the Holy Spirit.

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who recently published [Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language](#) (Orbis Books – 2023) and [Exploring Vatican II Treasures: Actors, Events, Insights](#), commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the close of Vatican II [1965-2025] (Faith Alive Books – 2024).

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