

Missionary Commentary

Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 5, 2024

Sunday Readings

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48
Psalm 98:1, 2-3a, 3b-4
1 John 4:7-10
John 15:9-17

[USCCB link to the Readings](#)

The New Commandment

Jesus tells us that there is no greater love than to “lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” I find myself thinking of all the missionaries who gave their lives— even to this very day. There are so many who have died in mission.

One who comes to mind is Dorothy Stang, a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur who was murdered because she was working with her friends, the indigenous people of the Amazon, to secure their land rights. I think of Sister Dorothy because I feel a kinship with her – we are both from Dayton, Ohio. My sister was taught by her congregation. One of my dear friends was a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur. I know her story. I am outraged by her murder, and I grieve her death. Is that enough? I do not think so.

Too often, we focus on the death of a martyr but not her life. Dorothy did not wake up on the morning of February 12, 2005, and decide “this is the day” to “lay down her life.” No, that decision started in 1966 when she arrived in Brazil. She became friends with the people – she lived among them, taught them about our faith, and prepared children for the sacraments. She learned from the people – how they cared for the rainforest and how the rainforest cared for them. She lived the rhythms of the seasons. She heard the cry of the people for the land. Together, they advocated for justice and resisted evil.

Jesus teaches us the way of divine love this Sunday. I am reminded of a cartoon about a little girl who was having problems with her annoying little brother, and her mom’s insistence that she “love him,” praying, “God, you love my brother, and I will love you.” Sorry. It does not work that way. God chooses us and loves us. We love God by loving others – by laying down our lives for our friends in countless ways.

We continue to celebrate the joy of Easter. Jesus wants our joy “to be complete.” That completion is found in loving others – first as strangers, then as friends, and then as family. This truth – that in and through Jesus we come to understand more perfectly the connection between love of God and love of neighbor – can serve us as an “examination of mission” as we approach Pentecost. Who needs God’s love in our neighborhoods?

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Perhaps they are the immigrants bused from Texas. Or the gangs of teenagers becoming criminals on our city streets. They could be the elderly forgotten in a nearby nursing home. They could also be the poor in El Salvador or Uganda since their sisters and brothers, immigrants living among us, are worshipping with us every Sunday. The question before us is who needs God love and how can we, because mission is always communal, serve God's mission of mercy to others.

Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading

Saint Peter is on mission. Mission itself reveals to him a divine truth, "that God shows no partiality."

Responsorial Psalm

The Lord has revealed his saving power to the nations, to "the ends of the earth." All people, break into song! Sing praise to God!

Second Reading

God is love. God reveals his love by sending Jesus into the world so we may have life through him. God loves us so we can love one another.

Gospel

Jesus chooses us to be his friends. We are his friends when we remain in his love and keep his commandment, to love one another as he has loved us.

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