

Easter:

Fifth Sunday in Easter

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Preparation

Background for Scripture Readings

First Reading

- The reading from Acts describes the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to report on the success of their missionary efforts.
- They help the new Christians organize their small communities.
- The Christian communities are encouraged to persevere in spite of the suffering that their new faith might bring them.

Second Reading

- The vision from Revelation is a description of God's final victory over evil and the establishment of the Kingdom in its fullness.
- Jerusalem, the city of God and God's people, comes from heaven and is made new by God.
- The new community is represented by love for God and for one another.

Gospel

- The Gospel presents the heart of Jesus' message: "Love one another as I have loved you."
- Before the passage, Judas left to betray Jesus.
- The glorification of Jesus happens through betrayal, suffering, and death.

Breaking Open the Word

Leader Instruction

Catechist Reflection Guide for the Fifth Sunday in Easter

First Reading: Acts 9:26-31—The community grows through the Holy Spirit.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 22:26-27, 28+30, 31-32—Praise the Lord in the assembly.

Second Reading: 1 John 3:18-24—Love one another in word and deed.

Gospel: John 15:1-8—The vine and the branches.

Invitation to prayer (30 sec.)

Ask the children to quiet themselves and sit comfortably. Begin the session with the Sign of the Cross. Have them take three deep breaths while you prompt them to relax as they breathe in God, our Father who loves us, Jesus Christ, his Son, our brother, and God's Holy Spirit who lovingly guides us.

Listening for a word or phrase to speak to your heart (3-4 min.)

Read the Gospel passage or special phrase slowly and deliberately while the children are silently listening. Ask them to listen for a word or phrase that seems to be God's word for them today. Spend about 30 seconds as they pick out their "word" from God. Ask them to silently repeat that word or phrase and to write it on their heart.

For Ages 5-6: Read aloud the words "**Love one another!**" Read John 13:34-35 from a children's Bible.

For Ages 7-8: Read aloud John 13:34-35 from the handout.

For Ages 9-14: Read aloud John 13:31-33a, 34-35. Ask young people to listen for a word or phrase that seems to be God's word for them today. Spend about 30 seconds as they pick out their word or phrase.

Ask them to silently repeat that word or phrase and to write it on their heart.

Loving God through his word (3-5 min.)

For Ages 5-6: Explain that **Jesus is a very loving person and while he was here on earth he did many loving things.** Ask children to volunteer what some of his loving actions were. Talk about loving actions children can take to love like Jesus. Have them complete the activity. Close with the prayer. You may wish to use gestures with the Alleluia or sing it.

For Ages 7-8: Have a conversation with the children about ways Jesus showed love to people. Write their responses on a board or chart paper. Using their responses, help them name things they can do that are similar to Jesus' actions. Have them complete the activity. Close with the prayer.

For ages 9-11: Ask young people to share their word or phrase. In the large group use the questions on the handout to engage young people in a conversation about the Gospel and how their own life witnesses to being loving. Close with the prayer.

For ages 12-14: Ask young people to share their word or phrase. Have young people take a few minutes to reflect on the questions and have them share their responses in the large group. Emphasize the importance of developing the virtue (habit) of charity. Close with the prayer.

Living the Gospel words through the week (3-5 min.)

The handouts describe one or two ways children and young people can live this reflection on the Gospel through the week at home, school, or play. If appropriate, have them add one or two more personal choices to act on this week.