

**1st Reading: Acts of the Apostles 10:25-26, 33-35, 44-48**

*Peter baptises the household of Cornelius*

On Peter's arrival Cornelius met him, and falling at his feet, worshipped him. But Peter made him get up, saying, "Stand up; I am only a mortal." Then Peter proceeded to speak and said, "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him."

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

**Responsorial: from Psalm 98**

*R./: The Lord has revealed his saving power to the nations*

Sing to the Lord a new song,  
for he has done marvellous deeds;  
His right hand has won victory for him,  
his holy arm. (R./)

The Lord has made his salvation known:  
in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice.  
He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness  
toward the house of Israel. (R./)

All the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation by our God.  
Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands;  
break into song; sing praise. (R./)

**2nd Reading: 1 John 4:7-10**

*Not that we first loved God but that he loved us*

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.

In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

## **Gospel Acclamation**

**Jn14:23**

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus said: 'If anyone loves me he will keep my word,  
and my Father will love him,  
and we shall come to him.'

Alleluia!

## **Gospel: John 15:9-17**

*Chosen by Jesus, abiding in love*

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.

You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another. "If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you.

## **Short reflection on the readings for today**

It is said that St. John lived to a great age, and as an old man was carried each Sunday to where the Christians at Ephesus were celebrating the Eucharist. Invariably he was asked to address the little congregation, and always he spoke about the love of God, until even these devout people grew a little weary of the same recurring theme. The old man would not change his subject but persisted in speaking about love, because for him the central theme of Jesus' message was the overwhelming love of God. "We believe in love," was the motto of those who were in full agreement with John.

This could easily be an empty slogan, except that John stated clearly what he meant by love, and it is echoed in today's 2nd Reading. "This is the love I mean: not our love for God, but God's love for us, when he sent his Son to be the sacrifice that takes away our sins." The deep truth about God is not that he loves us or that he is a lovable being, but rather that, in himself, *he is love*. By his nature God gives and shares of his inner self. It also means that whoever receives the gift of God's love must mirror God's own sharing of self. God's love was such as to impel him to give his only Son so that we might have life through him.

We are quite unable to love myself to the same degree that God loves us. God is even closer to us than we are to ourselves. Through the prophet Isaiah 49:16) God addresses to us the consoling words, "See upon the palm of my hand I have written your name." Indeed, in the person of Jesus, God, as it were, reaches out to us with two hands — the one extended in forgiveness which saves us from being engulfed here and now in our evil ways, the other casting a ray of light beyond the portals of death, reminding us that as God raised Christ from the dead, so he will redeem us too, when we have completed our earthly existence. That we are able to grasp those hands of God extended to us, that we are able to cling to them

steadfastly, is more a gift of God's grace than our own accomplishment. No amount of self-pruning, of teeth-gritting human striving, will bring us any closer to God.

But if we try and go through life in the conviction that God's loving care is watching over us, we will cease to be anxious about our own happiness, about what we would like to become. Strange as it may seem, faith in God's love for us frees us from all kinds of inner pressures, and yet at the same time brings us to a closer and more completely loving our God. "There are three things that last," St Paul tells us, "faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13). For coming into the presence of God, faith will give way to vision, hope to attainment, but love will continue alive and well for all eternity.