

Reading for Weekday in the Fifth Week of Eastertide

May 7th 2026

First reading

Acts 15:7-21

‘My judgement is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God.’

In those days: After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, ‘Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.’

And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. After they finished speaking, James replied, ‘Brothers, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, “After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.” Therefore my judgement is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.’

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 96(95):1-2a. 2b-3. 10. R3

Proclaim the wonders of the Lord among all the peoples.

or: Alleluia.

O sing a new song to the Lord;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.

O sing to the Lord; bless his name.

Proclaim his salvation day by day.

Tell among the nations his glory,
and his wonders among all the peoples.

Say to the nations, ‘The Lord is king.’

The world he made firm in its place;
he will judge the peoples in fairness.

Gospel Acclamation

John 10:27

Alleluia, alleluia.

My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord,
and I know them, and they follow me.

Alleluia.

Gospel

John 15:9-11

‘Abide in my love, that your joy may be full.’

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples, ‘As the Father has loved me, so have I 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. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.’

Short reflection on the reading for today

Both Peter and Paul had found a ready welcome for the Gospel from their non-Jewish hearers. They found among foreigners exactly what Jesus asked from his first disciples, an honest, open welcome for the word of God. Peter recognised that the Holy Spirit was as clearly present in the family of the Roman Cornelius, as at Pentecost when the Spirit came to the original group in the upper room. So without further ado he baptized those new converts into the faith of Jesus. He knew that this was the right thing to do, even though it meant setting a new precedent and setting aside previous Jewish-Christian practice. Sometimes we get new insights when faced with a *fait accompli*, such as meeting a person of undeniable honesty who opposes some Catholic traditions. There are sincere and intelligent people who object to some centuries-old doctrine. They are like those “gentiles” who received the Spirit despite what traditionalists might think. To conservative eyes, they seemed outside of God’s law, so how can they be Spirit guided? Or, are they partly right and we partly wrong, so that more dialogue is needed?

On this point the Bible offers two lines of advice: 1. We must not deny the presence of the Spirit wherever honesty and goodwill to others are manifestly present. This was St Peter’s position. 2. The other guideline comes from the Council of Jerusalem. The gentile converts were asked to respect deeply held sensitivities of their Jewish-Christian brethren. They must not use *blood* as food, nor marry with close relatives, nor eat any meat that had been sacrificed to pagan gods. Both sides were to make concessions to accommodate the others. Conversion does not consist only in accepting a *doctrine* as true; it is joining with a living family, where Jesus is the head.

Our Holy Scriptures have many texts about ‘joy’ and ‘rejoicing’. St Paul reckons that such joy is the fruit of the Spirit. In the gospel Jesus says he wants his own joy to be in us. This joy is at the heart of the gospel, unsurprisingly since *gospel* literally means ‘good news.’ On the night before his death Jesus wanted his joy to be in his disciples.

It may seem strange to speak of ‘joy’ in that rather ominous setting, with hostility and violent death facing him. The ‘joy’ of Jesus comes from knowing that he is loved by God the Father, no matter what. It also comes from sharing that love with his disciples and with all of us. Joy is the great by-product of authentic love, the Lord’s love for us and then our loving each other in his name.