



# Bible Study

## Sixth Sunday of Easter Year A

**St. Maria Goretti and  
St. Peter Claver  
Parishes**

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“Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.” Jn. 14:21 NABRE

### Reading I: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

#### SHAME THE WORLD – SHOW SOME LOVE.

In a world that celebrates violence, it is difficult to be a person of peace. The Nobel Peace Prize and other awards are designed to encourage individuals to sacrifice for peace. Some of us live in cities known for violence. The United States has been fighting two wars for more than ten years in response to the violence inflicted on this country. The obsession with violence continues, as the claimed right to bear arms replaces the right to health care, public welfare and safety. The Gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to love, forgive and care for each other. This cannot be accomplished at the point of, or in the possession of a weapon of violence. Isn't it time that we who profess to love Jesus Christ shame the world and show some love?

The first reading from the Acts of the



**To the world, the cross was to be an image of Shame. To us, it is a sign of God's love for us.**

Apostles shows Phillip's love for people he did not know. He brought the message of God's love to those who were natural enemies of the Jews. After they received the Holy Spirit, the disciples followed the command to be witnesses of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, Judea and all Samaria (Acts 1:6). After the death of Stephen at the hands of Saul (St. Paul), Christians from Jerusalem were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. (Acts 8:1-3). Samaritans were opposed to Jews by ethnicity, religion and economics. Yet, Phillip, perhaps a Greek speaking Jew, (Acts 6:5) went down to Samaria and proclaimed the "good news and the Name of Jesus Christ" (vv. 8:5). The mighty deeds he performed were the acts of love that Jesus himself performed and commanded (See Mk. 16:17). Phillip, in the face of persecution and rejection by the Jews in Jerusalem, preached and performed acts of love that inspired the Samaritans who sought baptism. Afterwards, and Peter and John went down to "lay hands" on them. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: What made Phillip preach love in an environment of hate? Why can't we do the same?

### PHILLIP THE EVANGELIST

Philip the evangelist, one of the seven men chosen to serve the early church because they were reported to be "full of faith and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5). Their task was to look after the Greek speaking widows and probably all of the poor in the Jerusalem church. Following the stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, many Christians scattered from Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). Philip became an evangelist and, in Samaria, preached the gospel, worked miracles, and brought many to faith in Christ (Acts 8:5-8). Probably the most noted conversion as a result of Phillip's ministry was the Ethiopian Eunuch, an official of great authority under Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians. Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. The eunuch was reading from Isa 53, the passage about the Suffering Servant. Philip used this great opportunity to preach Jesus to him. The eunuch said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). Then Philip baptized the eunuch.

After this event, Philip preached in Azotus (the Old Testament Ashdod) and Caesarea (Acts 8:40). He was still in Caesarea many years later when the apostle Paul passed through the city on his last journey to Jerusalem (Acts 21:8). Luke adds that Phillip had "four virgin daughters who prophesied" (Acts 21:9). (From Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

### Reading II: 1 Peter 3:15-18

#### SHAME THE WORLD – SHOW SOME

**LOVE.** St. Peter gave practical spiritual advice to Christians on how to show love and shame the world into following Christ. He reminded them that they have an opportunity and an obligation to break the cycle of returning evil for evil.

He advised them to always honor Christ as God and Lord of their lives and to be willing to defend their belief to anyone (v. 15). But the defense must not be such that it would turn people from Christ. The characteristics of a good defense are: 1. love, defined as gentleness, and which means upright and honorable; and, 2. a clear conscience, that is, without a vindictive motive. Why should Christians show love in defending our hope in Jesus Christ? So that those who seek to embarrass and humiliate us may themselves be put to shame by our loving conduct (vv. 17-18). It was Christ's love for us that permitted Him to die for us. The embarrassment of the cross has become a universal sign of love. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Have you ever defended your hope in Jesus Christ to someone? How did you do it?

## Gospel: John 14:15-21

**SHAME THE WORLD- SHOW SOME LOVE.** The definition of "shame" is interesting. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines it as, a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behavior. The definition itself describes a feeling of guilt for failing to do what we know is right. Love, on the other hand, is defined as a constant affection for a person. When we love God enough to do what we know is right, we invite others to do the same. If they choose not to imitate our conduct that demonstrates a love for God, they may experience painful feelings of humiliation or distress caused by their conscious decision to do what is wrong or foolish. This is what Jesus meant when he said; "you are the light of the world" (Mat. 5:14). He told us to shame the world by showing love for Him.

In the Gospel, Jesus continues His discussion with His disciples at the Last Supper. Jesus' statement, "*If you love me, you will obey my commandments,*" is a transition between Jesus' promise of answered prayer given as part of His response to Phillip's question in vv. 8-14 and the promise of the Holy Spirit introduced in v. 16. *Note that obedience is proof of love.* In other words, obedience is hollow without love. Our obedience should be based on love and not on a command to act. Put another way, obedience without love is shameful conduct.

Jesus knew that it was difficult for His disciples to understand the difference between acting out of pure love and acting in response to a command. So, He comforted and assured them that they would not be left alone, He promised to ask the Father to send another Counselor.

The Greek word translated "Helper" or "Counselor" is (παρακλητος) *parakletos* (vv. 15-19). In the secular context the word often refers to a legal counselor, but it literally means to call along side or to strengthen. Note that the Muslims are said to believe that Muhammad is the fulfillment of Jesus' promise that he would send another counselor. Verses 21-24 show how we shame the world. It is by remaining in the circle of love created by our love for God, who is Father, Son and Spirit. We are united with Him whenever we imitate the love that He showed us on the cross. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What example can you give of your own conduct that would be an example to others to resist the pressure of friends and others to live outside of God's commands?

## PRAY ABOUT IT!

### Monday

Read 1 Tim 6:17-18. Help someone deal with peer pressure.

### Tuesday

Read Mat. 5:14-15. Perform one act of kindness to a stranger.

### Wednesday

Read John 14:15-19. Assist someone who is experiencing difficulty.

### Thursday

Read 1 Peter 3:13. Be enthusiastic about doing good works.

### Friday

Read John 3:16. Attend Mass and Receive the Eucharist.

## THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

Confirmation, together with Baptism and Eucharist, form the Sacraments of Initiation that are all intimately connected. In the Sacrament of Confirmation, the baptized person is "sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit" and is strengthened for service to the Body of Christ.

The prophets of the Old Testament foretold that God's Spirit would rest upon the Messiah to sustain his mission. Their prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus the Messiah was conceived by the Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus on the occasion of his baptism by John.

Those who believed in the Apostles' preaching were baptized and received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. The Apostles baptized believers in water and the Spirit. Then they imparted the special gift of the Spirit through the laying on of hands. "The imposition of hands is rightly recognized by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church."

**Resources:** John, Neal M. Flanagan, O.S. M.; Collegeville Bible Commentary, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., p. 1004-1005; *Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year A 2017*, Joyce Zimmerman, C. PP. S. Kathleen Harmon, S.N.D. de N., Christopher W. Canlon, S. M. Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 128-131; Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner. The Sunday Readings Cycle A, Kevin O' Sullivan, O.F.M. Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 172-187; <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism>; <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/shame>; <https://lumina.bible.org/bible/John+14#>

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in Adult Faith Formation at St. Peter Claver and St. Maria Goretti Parishes in New Orleans, La. ©2014