

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

YEAR C

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

God of all people,
you made us
to live and love together
in peace,
and Jesus shows us the way.
Help us to be
more and more like him
that the whole world may see us
and believe in him
who lives with you
and the Holy Spirit
forever and ever.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

Again our readings focus on God's universal love. In the first reading, we again see the apostles preaching everywhere, proclaiming that "people of all nations can have faith and be saved."

The Gospel gives us the heart of the Christian message: Love. This is not an option for Christians, but a commandment. It is the proof of our discipleship. Others will come to believe because we love one another.

FIRST READING: Acts 14:21-27

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

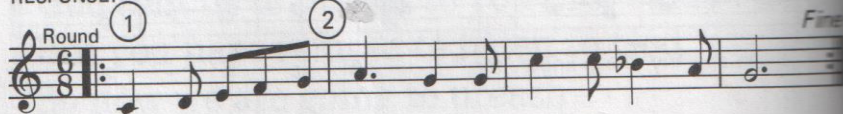
Paul and Barnabas went back to all the cities where they had taught the people about Jesus. They encouraged the people to stay strong in their faith in Jesus. They chose leaders in each church, and prayed that the Lord would take care of them.

Then Paul and Barnabas went to preach in many other cities, and finally they sailed back to Antioch. This is the city where the disciples had prayed especially for Paul and Barnabas and had sent them off to preach the Word of God. So when they got to Antioch, they gathered all the believers together and told them all that had happened. They told them how God had shown them that people of all nations can have faith and be saved.

The Word of the Lord.

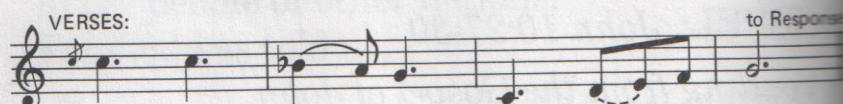
RESPONSE: Psalm 96

RESPONSE:



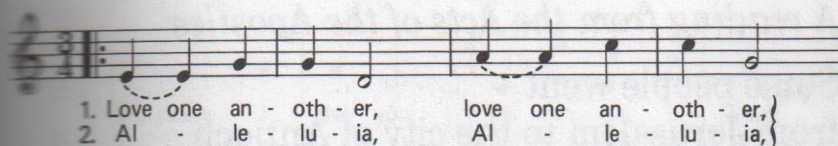
All the na-tions will praise you, and know that you are God.

VERSES:



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|--------------|-------|------------|-------|-----------------|---------|
| 1. Give | God | glo - ry. | Give | hon - or and | praise. |
| 2. Pro-claim | sal - | va - tion | day | af - ter | day. |
| 3. Tell | the | na - tions | God's | won - der - ful | deeds. |

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:



GOSPEL: *John 13:31-33a, 34-35*

A reading from the Gospel of John.

After Judas left the room
where the disciples were gathered,
Jesus said,

"Now my glory begins.
And when I receive glory, God receives glory.
My friends,
I am going to be with you
for only a little while longer.
But I am giving you a new commandment:
love one another.
You must love one another
just as I have loved you.
Everyone will know that you are my disciples
if you love one another."

The Gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

Jesus tells us how he wants us to love others. What did he say? What do you think Jesus meant when he said, "Love one another as I have loved you."

Note: This is a crucial point in our Christian faith. Christian love is a commitment. But children can easily misunderstand this. Jesus loves with "divine love." God is love. We are not commanded to love "as much as"—that is, with divine love. We are commanded to love "in the way" Jesus loved. This commandment is first given in an earlier part of this "last discourse of Jesus," just after he has washed the feet of his disciples in an attitude of service. Thus we are commanded to love (serve) one another. The greatest love is shown by giving our lives for others—in service. Loving everyone equally is difficult to achieve, even for adults. Such love is unconditional and attained by few. Jesus teaches us to show loving service to anyone and everyone. He tells us that when we live this way, we show that we are his disciples. How can children live out this commandment today? Children can begin to learn to love, as Jesus did, by being helpful to others. Help them to see ways of doing this (things possible for children),

- including all children in games;
- talking to a child who feels alone;
- helping someone with a task;
- taking time, perhaps from play, to help someone;
- accepting people just as they are.

Jesus asks us to love this way because he loves us so much. Jesus loves everyone and wants us to love everyone too. That's what a Christian is—someone who believes Jesus is living and who lives like him.