

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

6th Sunday of Easter | For Sunday, May 26th, 2019

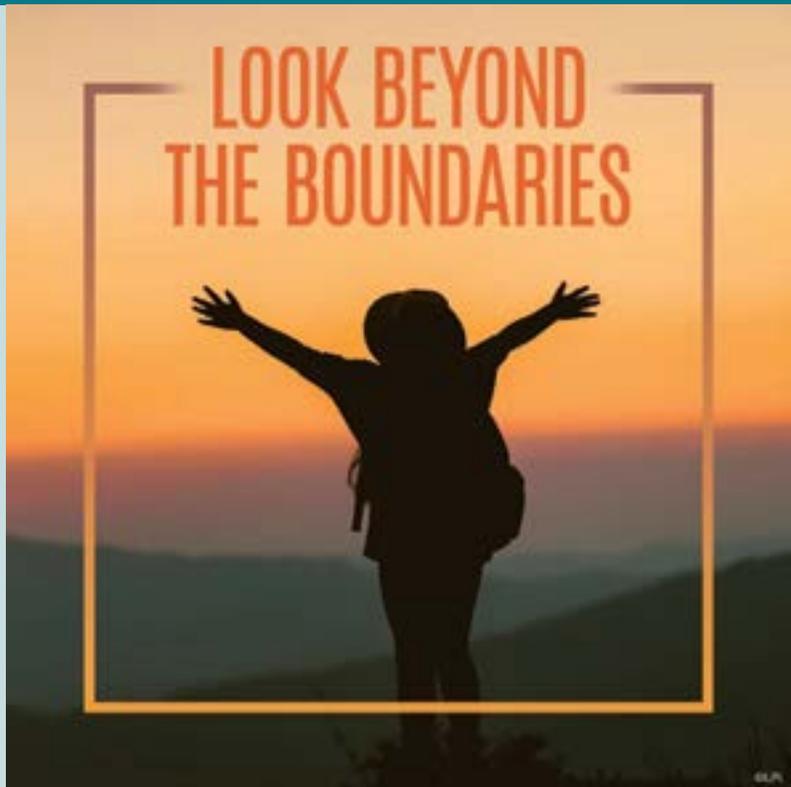
Living in Love

Written by Br. Silas Henderson, SDS

Acts 15:1-2, 22-29

Revelations 21:10-14, 22-23

John 14: 23-29



"The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you."

—John 14:26-27a

Before becoming a brother in the [Society of the Divine Savior \(the Salvatorians\)](#), I was a Benedictine monk for more than a decade. And, as a Benedictine, I was immersed in the very practical wisdom of St. Benedict and the *Rule* he wrote for his monks more than 1400 years ago. One of the defining characteristics of this great saint was his balanced understanding of the human person and of community dynamics. We see this at work in the third chapter of his *Rule* and his insistence that the abbot of the monastery call the community together whenever there was important business to discuss: "Let the Abbot call together the whole community and state the matter to be acted upon... The reason we have said that all should be called for counsel is that the Lord often reveals to the younger what is best."

We see the same wisdom was at work in the First Reading of [this Sunday's Mass](#). Recall how in the *Acts of the Apostles*, St. Luke presented that first generation of believers as living an almost idyllic existence, devoting themselves to the Apostles' teachings, "and the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers... All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need" (2:42, 44-45).

But this way of life was short-lived. After a short time, the Church faced persecution and wrestled with questions of inclusivity and what should be expected of the growing number of non-Jewish believers. While this might seem like a small issue for us today, this all-important question threatened to tear the Church apart. Recognizing what was at stake, the community had to discern how to respond to the challenges they faced.

So, what did the leaders of the Church do? They came together as a community, prayed, and listened to one another. Together they discerned how the Holy Spirit was at work in the Church – just as Jesus had promised it would be.

In the end, rather than closing ranks and opting for exclusivity, the Church's first leaders imagined a new way forward and enlisted others to help them in their mission: "The apostles and elders, in agreement with the whole church, decided to choose representatives and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. The ones they chose were Judas, who was called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers" (Acts 15:22). Humbly recognizing both their own limitations and opportunities before them, the leaders looked beyond the enclosed circle of the Apostles to find new workers capable of responding to the present needs.

This willingness to "look beyond the boundaries" was held up as the ideal for the Church by Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio only days before he was pope in 2013. In a speech delivered during the "general congregations" preceding the conclave, he said: "Evangelizing pre-supposes a desire in the Church to come out of herself. The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also in the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance, and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all misery." Despite criticism from many fronts, Pope Francis has made this vision of a Church moving "beyond the boundaries" the guiding principle of his ministry and this has certainly been a dominant theme in his papacy. Nothing less is expected of us.

In the end, what's at stake in all of this is the mission of the Church. Mutual discernment and collaboration in ministry – as we see it at work in the Early Church and in St. Benedict's monks – calls for each one of us to step up and own our faith, living out our unique vocation. Each one of us has a part to play. This is what we're called to and this is how we help the Church more perfectly reflect the beauty of that Heavenly Jerusalem ([cf. the Second Reading](#)), becoming more than we ever imagined she – that is, more than we – could be.

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PRAYER

Grant, almighty God,
that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion these days of joy,
and that what we relive in remembrance
we may always hold in what we do.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

— from *The Roman Missal: Collect for the Sixth Sunday of Easter*