

THEME FOR SUNDAY, MAY 15, 2011

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

GOD'S REAL COMMUNITY – CONNECTED AND STILL CONNECTING! ACTS 2: 42 – 47

Many people are searching for relationships in an authentic Christian environment. This morning we will see how God creates His community in the family of faith called the church. We will also discover the unique nature of the first post-Easter/Pentecost community created by God, as well as its members' passionate behavior toward God and devoted love for each other as His people.

Today we launch our new King of Kings vision: "Connecting People to Christ Now and Forever". As we move forward as a congregation, may the Holy Spirit lead us to treasure the unique blessings of being called into God's family, His Church, and enliven our efforts to imitate the healthy behaviors that our Lord designed for, and empowered in, the Acts 2 community.

The First Lesson

Acts 2: 42 - 47

(The 3,000 people who were led to faith and given the Holy Spirit at Pentecost now focus their attention as a gathered community that grows in their relationship with God and with each other. The Spirit-driven behaviors of these new Christians were prompted by their focus on the resurrected Christ and resulted in their positive witness in the community.)

⁴²And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Epistle Lesson

Colossians 3: 12 - 17

(St. Paul reminds us that the indwelling power of the Word flows out of us in love for one another and by sharing His wisdom with those around us. He also describes the character traits of Christians living as one body with Christ as the Head.)

¹²Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

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Gospel Lesson

John 13: 34, 35

(Jesus teaches His disciples – and us – that the unbelieving world will recognize us as belonging to Him by seeing our love for one another.)

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the thirteenth chapter.

C: **Glory to You, O Lord.**

(Jesus said,) ³⁴“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”