First Reading  Acts 15:1-2, 22-29

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and ourselves not to burden you beyond what is essential.

Some men came down from Judaea and taught the brothers, ‘Unless you have yourselves circumcised in the tradition of Moses you cannot be saved.’ This led to disagreement, and after Paul and Barnabas had had a long argument with these men it was arranged that Paul and Barnabas and others of the church should go up to Jerusalem and discuss the problem with the apostles and elders.

Then the apostles and elders decided to choose delegates to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; the whole church concurred with this. They chose Judas known as Barsabbas and Silas, both leading men in the brotherhood, and gave them this letter to take with them:

‘The apostles and elders, your brothers, send greetings to the brothers of pagan birth in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. We hear that some of our members have disturbed you with their demands and have unsettled your minds. They acted without any authority from us, and so we have decided unanimously to elect delegates and to send them to you with Barnabas and Paul, men who highly respect who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accordingly we are sending you Judas and Silas, who will confirm by word of mouth what we have written in this letter. It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to saddle you with any burden beyond these essentials: you are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from fornication. Avoid these, and you will do what is right. Farewell.’

The word of the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation Jn 14:23

Alleluia, alleluia! All who love me will keep my words, and my Father will love them and we will come to them.

Alleluia!

Gospel  Jn 14:23-29

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

The Holy Spirit will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you.

Jesus said to his disciples:

‘If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him. Those who do not love me do not keep my words. And my word is not my own: it is the word of the one who sent me. I have said these things to you while still with you; but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you.

Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me say: I am going away, and shall return. If you loved me you would have been glad to know that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you this now before it happens, so that when it does happen you may believe.’

The Gospel of the Lord.

In the spirit, the angel took me to the top of an enormous high mountain and showed me Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down from God out of heaven. It had all the radiant glory of God and glittered like some precious jewel of crystal-clear diamond. The walls of it were of a great height, and had twelve gates; at each of the twelve gates there was an angel, and over the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; on the east there were three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. The city walls stood on twelve foundation stones, each one of which bore the name of one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

I saw that there was no temple in the city since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the temple, and the city did not need the sun or the moon for light, since it was lit by the radiant glory of God and the Lamb was a lighted torch for it.

The word of the Lord.

Reflection

by Greg Sunter

Just like last week’s gospel, this passage also comes from the Last Supper discourse in the Gospel of John. Again, although its original context was pre-crucifixion, the language works in the post-resurrection Easter season as we anticipate the celebration of the Ascension next week. This double purpose language is, of course, no accident. The gospel was written 60 or more years after the death and resurrection of Jesus and so the writer was consciously conveying the double meaning of ‘going away’: Jesus going to his death; and Jesus going back to the Father. But Jesus also promises his return in this speech. Continuing the double meaning, the gospel writer knew that Jesus had come good on his promise to return after his death and so conveys to the gospel audience, and to us, a sense of confidence and hope that the second promised return will also be fulfilled at the right time.

In the meantime, Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples and to the world. The Holy Spirit is to be the Advocate (the Paraclete) of the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit performs a dual purpose: firstly, to carry on the teaching; and secondly, to continue to remind the believers of all that Jesus said and did. The action of the Holy Spirit continues in the world today – inspiring and teaching those who are open to hearing and keeping alive the memory of Jesus, his teaching and his compassion. We talk about being full of school spirit and team spirit but these feelings of loyalty and commitment are only a distant echo of what it is to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
In the small Portuguese village of Fatima, the Blessed Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to three shepherd children. On six occasions between May and October, 1917, Our Lady appeared to Lucia dos Santos and her two cousins, Francisco and Jacinta Marto. According to an account of the events given by Lucia, Mary entrusted the children with three secrets and encouraged them to do acts of penance and say the rosary every day. Thousands of people came to Fatima upon hearing of the visions, and on October 13, some 70,000 people reportedly witnessed a miraculous solar event. Fatima is now a major site of Marian pilgrimage.

Across
1: to have life
5: follow orders
6: to have listened
7: any person
8: to help somebody remember
9: The Holy _ _ _ _ _
12: devoted to the service of God

Down
2: all things
3: another word for dad
4: to order something to go to a place
10: pass knowledge onto others
11: Jesus told his disciples, “the Father will send the Spirit to take my p_ _ _ _”.

What did Jesus tell his disciples about the Holy Spirit? Unscramble the tiles below to reveal his message.