

5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER, YEAR C

May 1, 2010

QUEEN OF PEACE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA
Rev. Jeff McGowan

1ST READING: ACTS 14:21-27

"It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."

PSALM 145

Your kingdom is for all ages, and your dominion endures through all generations.

2ND READING: REVELATIONS 21:1-5A

"Behold God's dwelling is with the human race."

GOSPEL: JOHN 13:31-33A, 34-35

This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

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When we reach the heavenly gates to the New Jerusalem, where every tear will be wiped away and there is no pain, each and every human being, regardless of their beliefs or non-beliefs will come face to face with Jesus of Nazareth. After all, we're told no one comes to the Father except through him and he's the only face God chose to manifest God's self through. In that instant, all our hurts, our wounds, our questions will be healed. But today's Gospel begs the question: will the Lord *recognize us* as his disciples? He tells us how we would be recognized. He tells us we will be known by our love for one another.

Cindy was diagnosed with breast cancer. After surgery and six rounds of chemo therapy, Cindy's hair first shed and then started to fall out in clumps. She had always been proud of her beautiful hair so at first she was mortified but soon she was resigned to her falling hair. Finally she decided to shave her head and be done with it—but she was terrified at the thought of going to a beauty salon and having her head shaved so publically by a beautician. Just as she was thinking this through, she heard the buzz of her husband Bill's electric shaver from the bathroom. "Shave my head," Cindy asked her husband. "Please, tonight, now, will you shave my head?" Bill was taken back by Cindy's request, "Are you sure? Yeah, of course I will do it. I just thought you would want to wait awhile." "What am I waiting for .It already looks hideous. Some areas are already bald. Yes, I'm sure." So Cindy sat down on a kitchen chair that Bill brought to the

bathroom and Bill gently shaved his beloved's head. "Are you okay?" he would ask every so often. He gently brushed the hair from Cindy's shoulders. "Almost done. It really doesn't look bad." When he finished, Bill gently massaged Cindy's shoulders and neck and he held her hand as she looked into the mirror. But her image in the mirror mattered little to her; what Cindy remembers is the closeness of the moment. "I look like a long-necked chicken," Cindy laughed and cried at the same time. "Yes, but you are my chicken--my little chicken," Bill replied also laughing and crying. Cindy sat down and watched as Bill gathered up the scraps of hair. She remembers:

I could see that the act of shaving my head had given my husband great joy; he'd been able to do something for me at a time when he felt helpless to help me. As for me, it was the most romantic, spiritual night of my life.

When young couples come to me for marriage preparation, I can see the world is different for them. I imagine ice cream tastes better and the stars burn brighter, flowers bloom and birds sing for young lovers. I was in Paris this week and couples of all ages are openly kissing all over the city, on church steps and in garden paths. It really is so beautiful. I look at them and pray their love will be as romantic, intimate and spiritual as Bill and Cindy's love is. In the Acts passage we read today, Paul told the people "It is necessary to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." I pray the particular hardships these new lovers will go through will bring them closer together. We all know there will be hardships.

And that, I think is the point of Jesus commandment. Jesus commandment extends love beyond young lovers to families, friends and even further, to the Samaritans, the lepers and the bums who are in themselves a hardship to love. The message is the same for all. Yes, by all means, love while the flowers are in bloom and prepare yourselves to love when winter comes. Love when it is easy to love and grow deeper into love when it is tough. That's what it means to love one another as he has loved us, good times and bad, sickness and health ...all the days of our lives. Then he will in fact recognize us as his own disciples and welcome us into his father's joy.