

# Our Sunday Readings

## For the Name

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES  
1:15-17,20a,20c-26  
PSALM 103:1-2,11-12,19-20  
1 JOHN 4:11-16  
JOHN 17:11b-19

### **ACTS 1:15-17,20a,20c-26**

#### **Reading closely**

1. Do you think the group readily accepts Peter's leadership?
2. What all might the group discuss before nominating Joseph and Matthias?
3. Do you think anyone asks Joseph and Matthias if they want to replace Judas?
4. What might Joseph and Matthias be thinking and feeling throughout this process?

#### **Living the word**

5. Are you surprised that there were others who accompanied Jesus during his ministry?
6. How do you make decisions?
7. How exactly do you bring God into your decisions?

### **THE FIRST READING**

#### **The Twelve**

By choosing twelve disciples from among his larger group of followers, Jesus symbolically replaced the twelve tribes of Israel, which had descended from Abraham. Jesus thus redefined God's chosen people as those who accepted him rather than those who had a shared ancestry. When Judas betrays Jesus and then dies, this symbolism is broken.

### **Numbered among us**

Peter is speaking after Jesus' ascension but before the arrival of the Spirit. The Spirit will enable Jesus' followers to bring more people into God's new family. Because this family is symbolized by the twelve disciples whom Jesus chose, Jesus' followers want to fill the absence Judas left. They want to maintain that symbol of the new or renewed Israel.

Although the Church today does not maintain a core group of twelve leaders, the Church does maintain a hierarchical structure in which people fill certain offices or positions of authority. The leadership that Peter demonstrated anticipates the office and authority of the papacy.

### **Casting lots**

*Casting lots* means the group threw or tossed something like coins or a dice. The practice seems like leaving the final decision to chance, but the disciples use it as another way to bring God into the process. Having used their own criteria to nominate Joseph and Matthias, the group then prays and leaves the final choice to God.

**JOHN 17:11b-19****Reading closely**

1. What might the disciples do as Jesus prays?
2. What meaning do the words *keep*, *protect*, and *guard* have for you?
3. How would you explain Judas' betrayal?
4. What are ways the world could act against Jesus' disciples?
5. How might the disciples react to this prayer?

**Living the word**

6. What part of this prayer stands out to you?
7. What is your relationship to *the world*?
8. Do you act as someone who is consecrated?
9. What all do you believe is *the truth*?

**THE GOSPEL READING****Prayerful conclusion**

Every Seventh Sunday of Easter we hear part of the long prayer with which Jesus concludes his farewell speech to his disciples (John 13-17). After he offers this prayer, Jesus is arrested. The prayer itself echoes versions of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4.

**The divine name**

When God called Moses to lead his people out of Egypt, Moses asked for God's name. The name, which is impossible to translate precisely, is usually rendered "I am" (Exodus 3:14).

Throughout John's Gospel Jesus uses "I am" statements: I am the bread of life (6:35), I am the light of the world (8:12), I am the good shepherd (10:11), and so on. By invoking the divine name Jesus declares his unity with the Father.

**Unity**

God, the Father, entrusted the work of revealing his love to Jesus, who is about to complete that work. This unity of love between Father and Son is the same unity Jesus wants his disciples to have among themselves (v.11). As long as they remain united in their love for one another, they remain united to Jesus (13:34-35). God will then protect them from evil and ultimately bring them into eternal union with him.

**The world**

The dominant meaning of *the world* in John's Gospel is negative: it refers to humankind in its alienation from or rejection of God (v.14). In this Gospel the world judges and condemns Jesus, who both speaks and embodies God's *word* (v.14).

Those who believe that God sent Jesus to reveal God's love will endure the same hostility that Jesus did (v.16). Jesus thus prays for God to protect his followers (v.15).

**Consecrate/Sanctify**

The word *consecrate* means to declare or establish something or someone as set apart for a particular purpose. Jesus prays for God to set his disciples apart from the world so that they can help save it.

Jesus wants his disciples to tell *the truth*. This entire Gospel is like a courtroom drama in which Jesus is on trial. People like John the Baptist are witnesses for the defense, testifying to the truth that God sent Jesus to save the world. Although the world rejects this testimony and crucifies Jesus, Jesus still wants his disciples to give testimony on his behalf. When he rises from the dead, they can proclaim that God still loves and is still saving the world.

**PRAYER**

*adapted from the Order for the Blessing of Missionaries  
in The Book of Blessings*

O God, in your merciful providence  
you sent your Son into the world  
to free us from sin and  
to enrich us with the Holy Spirit.

Before he returned to you, Father,  
he sent his apostles to proclaim the gospel.

Lord, look kindly on us.

Make us messengers of salvation and peace.  
Guide our steps and strengthen us in spirit  
so that we will not falter through weariness.

Make our words the echo of Christ's voice  
so that those who hear us may be drawn to you.

Fill our hearts with the Holy Spirit  
so that we may lead many to you, the Father of all.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.