**5th Sunday of Easter, Cycle C**

Acts 14: 21-27; Rev 21: 1-5a; John 13: 31-33a; 34-35

May 18/19, 2019

Behold, I make all things new… I give you a new commandment: Love one another.

It is difficult for us in the 21st Century to appreciate how different and new life was for people who became Christian in the early Church. How they thought about life, death, love, family and each other, their work, and the future, all changed after they were baptized, confirmed and received the Eucharist. Most of them kept their same jobs although some may have changed occupations, especially those in the military, but they dressed the same, spoke the same language, and lived in the same houses, but they thought, understood, and approached each other and the world in a very new and different way. Things had changed. They were very different because they knew that God had changed them, that they were new men and women.

St. Paul wrote during those years about taking off the “old” and putting on the “new.” Even Jesus said that if you put your hand to the plow, there was no turning back. The change would be forever.

The reality is that all of us here today who have been baptized, confirmed and brought into communion with the Church have been made completely new on a spiritual level. Who we once were no longer spiritually exists. We have been made new through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. The old is gone forever. We are marked by God as one of his children, a member of the Body of Christ, the Church. We have been reborn to a new life, and this new life is given to us because of Divine Love. God’s love renews us and restores us, and because God’s love has done this for us, he gives us a new commandment to love one another, as he has loved us, so his love, through us, will transform the world.

When I baptize a child, I always tell the parents and godparents that if they could only see with their physical eyes what is happening spiritually to the child in baptism, they would be stunned, and blinded by the beauty of the change. They would be in awe by what God’s love does for the child. Someday, we will see the change in heaven, but now the best we can do is see by faith.

If only we would embrace how new we have become! If only we could see it! The world in which we live and especially our sinful choices in life blind us to the change. Our sinful choices and influence of the world leave us thinking we are no different now than before, that we are not beautiful, that we have little value, that we are not holy, that our membership in the Church means little. Do you ever find yourself thinking these things: I am not beautiful; I have no value; I am not holy; It makes no difference if I am a member of the Church or not. Do you ever find yourselves thinking those things of others?

If only we could see and accept the newness of life and love that is ours because we have been baptized, confirmed, and made full members of the Body of Christ, the Church, through the love of God! If only we truly believed it! How different we would treat ourselves and each other. Indeed, we would truly love one another and live out the new commandment. The old order would pass away. Tears would be dried and fears eased, as we heard in the second reading.

There is nothing more precious in God’ eyes than you. There is nothing more precious in God’ eyes than the man or woman next to you. There is nothing more precious in God’s eyes than the unborn child in the womb. There is nothing more precious in God’s eyes than the elderly person alone in a care center, or the immigrant, or the man in prison.

Oh…. The dignity that is ours because of our baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and our communion with Christ in the Church. Oh… the dignity that could be for others if we only believe and obey the new commandment to love one another.

Behold, God has made all things new within you. Love one another now, as he has loved us.