

5th Sunday of Easter, Cycle C
Acts of the Apostles 14:21-27
Psalm 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13
Revelation 21:1-5A
John 13:31-33A, 34-35
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We value some things because they are new, like the latest best-seller, the smell of a new car, the look and feel of a crisp new banknote, the first night of a new play, Beaujolais nouveau, the first bloom of Spring, a new baby.

We value other things because they are old: an old leather-bound book taken down from a dusty mahogany shelf, a statue with a patina of age, old port, great-grandmother's hand-stitched quilt. . . great-grandmother.

We love the Church because it is old. Think of a Norman parish church with an ancient rood screen and a leper's squint. Think of a statue of an apostle -- its foot worn away by the kisses of millions of pilgrims over hundreds of years, or of a venerable monsignor, or of a favorite old hymn. Yes, the Church is ancient and timeworn.

In our first reading, St. Paul warns his listeners of the many trials the Church would have to endure before entering into the reign of God. How right he was. Paul died about thirty-five years after Jesus did. Imagine for a moment the cataract of persecutions and crises the Church has endured since. Surely most of the rough edges have by now been worn away. And think of the great men and women those persecutions and crises have called forth. A sea of faces from different times and places, in every imaginable costume: Ancient Roman ladies, English

gentry, African warriors and Japanese peasant farmers; all of them holy.

But our prayers and readings today remind us that if the Church is old, it is also perpetually *new*. “Sing to the Lord a *new* song.” “I, John, saw a *new* heaven and a *new* earth.” And God said, “See I will make all things *new*.” “I give you a *new* commandment: Love one another.” “May these mysteries give us *new* purpose and bring us to a *new* life in you.”

We might think of the Church as an ancient, timeworn, chest, built by the faith of all those holy people, defended with their lives, and sustained by their prayers. The chest is jewel-encrusted, but battle-scarred. Its surface is worm-eaten and soiled in places. But inside that chest is a bright, shining, pristine treasure -- just as fresh and new as it was 2,000 years ago: the Good News of the life, Passion and Resurrection of Christ, and the Sacramental presence of Christ in the world. That treasure is our inheritance. It is a gift from God to each one of us. And if we are willing to bring it into our lives, and help to share it with those who come after us, however old we are, *we* will become new again.