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Even though we are in the Easter season, these readings from the Seventh Sunday of Easter draw me back to a particular date in November, specifically Nov. 3. On that day I professed my final vows as a Dominican Sister of Caldwell, New Jersey. On that day some years later, my sister Kathy became engaged to her wonderful husband, Ralph. And on that day this past year, my mom took hold of her granddaughter Jenna's hand, held it tight, looked into her eyes and said, "Don't worry about me; I'll be just fine." Six days later, my mom passed into the embrace of God.

Seventh Sunday of Easter

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Acts 1:15-17, 20a, 20c-26

Psalms 103

1 John 4:11-16

John 17:11b-19

Because of her great love for all of her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, my mother Mary often worried about us and prayed for us every day. Even as she was journeying toward the fullness of our God, she was thinking about us, consoling us and reassuring us that all would be well. Nov. 3 will always be a day about love for me; today's readings are also about love during this Easter season.

We are in post-Resurrection times, but the Lectionary offers us a Gospel reading that looks back on Jesus' last days before his death. In John's Gospel, we listen to Jesus' prayer that he offers to God for his disciples before he makes his final journey to God.

Like my mother, Jesus is also concerned about those whom he loves so dearly, who will be left to carry on the work of evangelization and the mission of love. Jesus' prayer captures his deep concern for his beloved ones as he entrusts them to God. My mother passed on; Jesus passed on. Yet, their spirits remain alive in our midst. As we see in the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus' disciples carry on with their lives and their work to fulfill Jesus' vision and mission. Likewise, my family and I continue on with our lives as we try to fulfill the mission and legacy of love entrusted to us by the

ones who loved us first.

In the reading from Acts, we see that one of the first orders of business within the community of believers is to choose someone to take the place of Judas Iscariot in the apostolic ministry. The writer of Acts features Peter exercising leadership among some 120 persons gathered in one place. Peter's style of leadership is collaborative. He allows the assembled community to propose two possibilities, the names of which the community then brings to prayer. Only after the community prays does the community then cast lots to make its choice. Matthias becomes one of the twelve Apostles.

Various verses of Psalm 103 become a fitting response to the reading from Acts. The choice of Matthias was a response to grace received through prayer. Psalm 103 offers noble and serene tones that praise God's grace and benevolence. Within the Psalter, this psalm is clearly identified both as a song of thanksgiving and a hymn of praise. The psalmist acknowledges God's great love, which far outweighs any thought of human transgression. Two poetic metaphors express both of these sentiments. Israel's God is one whose reign and activity center on steadfast love and mercy. This God acts out of compassion and not out of moral calculations. Divine generosity surpasses divine wrath. In Psalm 103, then, the psalmist addresses this God in hymnic glorification.

The reading from the First Letter of John picks up on the theme of love expressed in Psalm 103. God's love for humankind is deep and generous, and the author of 1 John urges his listeners to love one another in the same way that God loves each person. Loving one another as God loves each person is a tangible sign of God's life and presence within the person called to love. Furthermore, Jesus is the expression of God's love par excellence. Those who love remain not only in communion with Jesus but also in union with God. To love as God loves, however, is not easy. For that reason, the writer of John's Gospel features Jesus praying for his disciples as Jesus' own life among them begins to draw to a close.



Thus, Sunday's readings show us that to love others as God loves us is a virtue of divine origin that requires grace to carry out the task. Love is a characteristic of God and a sign of God's life and presence within and among us. Care for the common good through the exercise of collaboration and discernment is necessary when making decisions that will have an impact on furthering the church's apostolic mission. Love at its depths is an invitation to let go to God, knowing that God will be present to all our concerns and will bring all of our efforts to completion.

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Editor's note: This Sunday scripture commentary appears in full in NCR's sister publication *Celebration*, a worship and homiletic resource. Request a sample issue at CelebrationPublications.org. Sign up to receive [email newsletters](#) every time *Spiritual Reflections* is posted.

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