



Third Sunday of Easter - B

In the first reading (Acts 3:13-15, 15-19) Peter tells the people that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has glorified Jesus whom they had handed over to Pilate. They denied the release of the Holy and Righteous One and had asked that a murderer to be released in his place. The author of life they had put to death but God had raised Him from the dead. Peter and his friends were witnesses to this. Peter acknowledged that they had acted in doing this out of ignorance. However, God had used this to bring about fulfillment of what He had announced through the prophets: i.e. that His Christ would suffer. Therefore they should repent and be converted that their sins may be wiped away.

Something to Think About:

1. Chapter 3 of the Acts of the Apostles begins with Peter healing a lame beggar of the door of the temple which caused a large crowd to gather. He then addresses the people by telling them that they were responsible for Jesus' death. However God choose to glorify Him by raising Him up and to use their mistake to fulfill all the scriptures that had spoken about the Messiah. Thus God was able to work through them to accomplish something far greater than they could ever imagine. God is always working to bring good to humankind even out of evil circumstances. God is with us always, even in our darkest hours and will bring good out of seemingly overwhelming evil circumstances. God is always by our side to help us.

2. Peter said that the crowds had acted out of ignorance when they had asked for Barabbas to be released instead of Jesus. Jews have often been denounced for the death of Jesus down through the centuries but Vatican II laid out a new understanding about how the Church relates to Jews and Judaism. It said:

As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation, nor did the Jews

in large number accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading. Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues – such is the witness of the Apostle [Paul]. In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits the day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and “serve Him shoulder to shoulder” (Zeph 3:9).

Jesus forgave those who crucified Him on the cross when He said, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” And so should we.

3. Peter's address ends with a call for the people to repent and be converted. This is the reason that Jesus came in the first place: i.e. that all might be forgiven. This is office that He gave to His priests to be able to forgive or retain sin. Here we see Peter beginning to act on that authority.

In the second reading (1 Jn 2:1-5a) the author states that he is writing so that his readers will not commit sin. But if should anyone sin, we have our Advocate, Jesus Christ, who is with the Father. He is the expiation for our sins and those of the whole world. We can be sure we know Him when we keep His commandments. On the other hand, those who say they know Him but do not keep His commandments are liars. The one who keeps His word has the love of God perfected in him.

Something to Think About:

1. The author of the First Letter of John says that Jesus is our Advocate or in Greek our Parakletos. This is the same word that is used for the Holy Spirit. So we have two Advocates: Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus now sits at the right hand of God the Father and advocates on our behalf. He who knows humanity through and through and is the one who chose to die in order that we might be saved and now

He advocates on our behalf. This is a great consolation. It gives us hope and in the end the faithful will be saved.

2. The author also says that Jesus is the expiation for our sins. Here the Greek word is hilasmos. It is the same word that is used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament's first five books) for the sacrifice of atonement that was offered for the sins of the people. In this sacrifice the animal's blood would be poured out on the altar in order to reconcile the sinner with God. Thus Jesus is the atonement for our sins whose blood was poured out on the cross.

3. The author also wants us to know that just because Jesus has atoned for our sins that does not mean that we can do anything we might want to do. No, we are still bound by the commandments in the sense that if we love God we will do His will. And God has expressed His will to us by providing us with His commandments.

In the gospel (Lk 24:35-48) two disciples recounted how they met Jesus on the way and how He was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. As they were speaking, Jesus stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." But they were terrified. Jesus asked, "Why are you troubled?" He told them to look at His hands and his feet and to touch Him for He was not a ghost. Then He showed them His hands and feet. They were incredulous for joy and were amazed. Jesus asked for something to eat and He ate a baked fish. Earlier He had told them that everything that was written about Him in the law, the prophets and the psalms had to be fulfilled. He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures. He told them that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be preached to nations in His name. They were witnesses to these things.

Something to Think About:

1. Our gospel today breaks into the middle of the story known as the Disciples on the Road to Emmaus. Two of Jesus' disciples had left Jerusalem on the third day after His death and were commiserating with each other about what had happened to Him. It is then that Jesus walks up along beside them and begins to explain to them why all this needed to happen to Him in order to fulfill all of the scriptures. While they did not recognize Him on the road, they did that evening when He broke the bread. As the two disciples rush back to Jerusalem to tell the eleven apostles that He was alive, our gospel begins.

2. Jesus begins His appearance to His disciples with the greeting "Shalom." This is more than just wishing another person peace. It means that peace which brings together God, human beings and all creation in justice, fulfillment and delight. It is an expression of the way that things ought to be. While the disciples might have been frightened and ashamed of their actions over the previous few days, by this greeting Jesus assures them that all is forgiven. Things are the way they should be. It is time to go on from here.

3. Next Jesus reassures them that it is really He. He shows them His hands and His feet. As in the gospel form last week, when Jesus wanted Thomas to believe in Him, He showed them all His hands and feet so that they too would believe in Him. It was not just someone who looked like Him, it was really Him, the one who had been crucified.

4. Even this apparently did not convince the disciples because they were frightened. They thought that they were seeing a ghost, or perhaps an apparition or perhaps they were dreaming. To waylay these thoughts Jesus asked for something to eat. He ate a baked fish before them all to show them that He had a real body. Unlike the Sadducees who thought that both soul and body died at the end of a person's life on earth and unlike that Pharisees that thought the soul left the body at their death but would be reunited with their body on the last day, and unlike Herod who believed in reincarnation where the soul enters a new body, Jesus was there in His own flesh and body.

5. Like He had done with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus Jesus now opens up the minds and hearts of the apostles to the scriptures that referred to Him in order to show them that He needed to go through all that had happened to Him. This was to fulfill all that was in the law, the prophets and psalms about Him. Jesus goes through the whole of Jewish religious writings concerning how God would save His people and how God was faithful to all His promises. While Jesus had tried to show them these truths during His public ministry, the apostles were not ready to accept it. Now that they had seen Him alive after He had been murdered, it all became clear to them.

6. Finally Jesus commissions His apostles to preach the message of reconciliation to all nations. They are to go out into the whole world and tell everyone that if anyone repents of their sins it is possible for them to live eternally.

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