3rd Sunday of Easter Year C

Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

Peter said to the people: This sermon took place in the temple at three in the afternoon. Peter had just cured the man crippled from birth. The Jewish people viewed afflictions as a punishment for sins. The cure represented forgiveness. Peter convicts his audience of disowning and putting to death their Messiah and God and calls for repentance. This particular act of this particular Apostle earned him a night in jail but swelled the number of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem to about 5,000!

13. "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, This is the formula spoken to Moses at the burning bush. the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus, The power by which the cripple was healed is the same as the power shown by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Peter identifies Jesus with Isaiah's "Servant of Yahweh" who, because he was a man of suffering and sorrow, the Jews did not identify with the future Messiah. That Messiah, Jesus Christ, combines in his person SUFFERING AND VICTORY! whom you handed over and denied in Pilate's presence when he had decided to release him. Three times Pilate tried to release Jesus only to give into the people's demands. The personal sin of the participants (Judas, the Sanhedrin, Pilate) is known to God alone and we cannot charge the Jews with the crimes committed during the Passion. In forgiving them on the cross, Jesus remarks that "they know not what they do." In verse 17 Peter also acknowledges their ignorance. The Church teaches that "sinners were the authors and the ministers of all the sufferings that the divine Redeemer endured. And it can be seen that our crime is greater in us than in the Jews because we profess to know him and when we deny him by our deeds, we in some way seem to lay violent hands on him."
14. You denied the Holy and Righteous One "Holy" and "Righteous One" are ancient messianic titles." As God's worthy servant, obedient unto death, Jesus is seen as the embodiment of the qualities of the Messiah foretold in Israel's history. and asked that a murderer be released to you. This refers to the release of Barabbas at the request of the crowd. The intended contrast here is obviously between the one who gives life and the murderer who takes it away.
15. The author of life All creation and life comes from Jesus Christ, who created the world with the Father. Consider that this refers not only to physical life but also to spiritual life. you put to death, Every time a person sins—sin means the death of the soul—this choice is being made again. but God raised him from the dead; of this we are witnesses. Peter and John are present (3:1) and two witnesses are required in a life and death situation. These apostles are witnesses to the resurrected life.
17. Now I know, brothers, that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did; The perpetrators of Christ's death were unaware of the full gravity of their actions or the divine plan that lay behind them. This traditional missionary theme does not deny the Jews' guilt, but rather explains why God still offers them a chance to repent.
18. but God has thus brought to fulfillment what he had announced beforehand through the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer.
19. Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away." Peter encourages the people to change their lives and turn to God. This includes Baptism.

1 John 2:1-5a

This was probably written by the Apostle John as a circulating letter to the various churches in Asia Minor where some false teachers (antichrists, deceivers, children of the devil, as St. John calls them) had appeared in these young churches and he saw them as a threat to purity of faith and Christian morality. The Apostle is writing to denounce their errors and strengthen the faith of believers.

1. My children, When John wrote this he was an old man and had many spiritual children. I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. The FACT is this: despite the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, there is still sin in the world. The POINT is this: despite the presence of sin, there is never-ending forgiveness available *to all who seek it!*. Keep in mind that only one who is just may enter God's presence to plead for the unjust. St. Pope Gregory I gives us an insight: "There is a problem here. A righteous advocate never takes unrighteous cases, which ours of course are. What can we do, dear brothers? The only way to get around this is to follow what Scripture says: 'The righteous man accuses himself first of all.' Therefore a sinner who weeps over his sins and accuses himself is set on the path of righteousness and Jesus can take up his case."
2. He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world. The best defense attorney in the universe will plead our case. He has already paid the price for our crimes! No one is beyond hope of forgiveness and Christ's atoning power is unlimited!
3. The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments. To the Jew, knowledge implied intimacy. This knowledge has nothing to do with merely intellectual attainments, rather, it means a life lived in accordance with God's revealed will which echoes the teaching of the OT prophets. John's purpose here is to protest against the "Gnostics" who were boasting of having special knowledge of God superior to that of the ordinary faithful. They apparently believed that knowledge was all that was necessary for salvation. They also denied the possibility of sin in those who had been saved through baptism and they consequently saw themselves as being above the reality of sin, indeed, even above the responsibility to strive for greater goodness. John makes it clear that such notions are incompatible with true Christian faith.
4. Those who say "I know him," but do not keep his commandments are liars, and the truth is not in them. They talk the talk but they don't walk the walk!
5. But whoever keeps his word, This practical knowledge of God, which means a life lived in accordance with his revealed moral will, echoes the teaching of the OT prophets. The author is protesting a "Gnostic" approach to religion that would attempt to divorce moral conduct from intellectual commitment. the love of God is truly perfected in him.

Luke 24:35-48

Our Gospel today begins with the finishing of the story about how Jesus appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

35. The two disciples recounted what had taken place on the way These are men who saw the resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmaus. One of them was Cleopas, probably the brother of St. Joseph, which would make him the uncle of Jesus. He was also the father of Matthew, James the Less, and Simeon (who became the bishop of Jerusalem in 62 A.D.) and how Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of bread. Among Jews this was a

ceremonial gesture that commenced the celebration of an ordinary meal. Among Christians this was a description of the Eucharistic liturgy. This would have been the second Mass, the first being at the Last Supper.
36. While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." Now Jesus appears to the disciples behind locked doors, and they were terribly frightened. They thought they were looking at a ghost.
37. But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. These men saw Jesus but they did not recognize him. Christ is present and may be easily seen, even today. He is present in the Church, people, and the "breaking of the bread," or Eucharist. He is also present in the Scriptures, as the disciples learned on the way to Emmaus. It is not difficult to see Christ, but it may be difficult to recognize him! Mother Teresa had the insight that Christ is present in the world, but we often do not recognize him in the "distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor."
38. Then he said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts?
39. Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have."
40. And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. Jesus' risen body is truly physical but no longer earthly since his humanity is now incorruptible and endowed with spiritual qualities. He forever reigns in a human body, but one that can pass through locked doors, vanish at will, and is no longer subject to the limitations of time, space, and the laws of nature.
41. While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, he asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?"
42. They gave him a piece of baked fish;
43. he took it and ate it in front of them. The physical reality of Christ's resurrected body is emphasized here. From the earliest times in the church, there was a danger of docetism, the heretical belief that Jesus was God behind a thin veneer of humanity; thus his suffering was only playacting, and his resurrection was simply a return to a completely spiritual existence with no bodily effect. This passage disproves those beliefs as it stresses that Jesus' resurrected body is REAL. The disciples touch him; the marks of the passion are visible in his hands and feet; he eats with the disciples.
44. He said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled." This is the way that Jesus uses to introduce the Scriptural instruction that will help them to assimilate the truth of this marvelous event. The Old Testament is referred to in a traditional way by naming its three collections: law, prophets, and psalms.
45. Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.
46. And he said to them, "Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day This was a mystery foretold in the OT. Jesus' mockery and rejection recall Ps 31, 69, 118 and Is 50:6. His agony and Crucifixion are depicted in Ps 22 and Is 53. The OT background for rising on the third day was diverse: (1) Isaac was for three days under a death sentence until God intervened to give him back alive to Abraham on the third day. This was a historical preview of Jesus rising to new life after obeying his Father unto death. (2) Jesus himself spoke of the experience of Jonah coming forth from a whale after three days in its stomach as a foreshadowing of his own emergence from the grave after three days in the earth. (3) Hosea depicts Israel's restoration from exile as a third-day resurrection. (Hos 6:2) Since the Messiah represents Israel in the fullest sense, embodying

both its vocation and destiny, Christ's own Resurrection initiates the resurrection of Israel from a state of spiritual death (Rom 11:14, 25-27). There were the three days of darkness experienced by the Egyptians as the ninth plague. For the Israelites with Moses there is also a period of three days of preparation in which they had to sanctify themselves and wash their garments before meeting the Lord on Mt. Sinai…….St. Bede wrote that Christ lay two nights in the tomb to rescue man from the twofold death of sin. For souls die spiritually on account of sin, and bodies die physically as a penalty for Original Sin. Victorious on the third day, Christ now raises our souls to new life in grace and will later raise our bodies in glory.

47. and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, The Church dispenses the blessings of the New Covenant through the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. July 15, 12 years after the Resurrection, was the date for the dispersion of the Apostles. James, the son of Zebedee was beheaded. To James the Just went the task of preaching to the people in Israel. Peter, John, Philip and later Paul preached to the rest of the Roman Empire. That left seven Apostles, more than half the Apostolic College, for the shadowy, distant lands where no Roman legion had ever marched. Eventually, all but John and possibly Matthew were killed for their faith. Once you recognize Jesus, you can't stay in the upper room!

48. You are witnesses of these things." This is the last appearance of Jesus related by Luke and this passage is followed by his account of the Ascension. Before Jesus ascends, however, he opens the disciples' minds to understanding the scriptures and commissions them to preach in his name to all the nations. Thus Luke sets the stage for the sequel to this gospel, the Acts of the Apostles. In the sacrament of Confirmation WE are given a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as TRUE WITNESSES of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross.

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "The Catechism Of The Catholic Church," (2) The Commentary Notes of Tim Gray, (3) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2003" by Aelred R. Rosser, (4) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (5) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Acts of the Apostles" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (6) "The Navarre Bible: Acts Of The Apostles," (7) "The Acts of the Apostles" by Luke Timothy Johnson, (8) "The Bread Of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken and Marie Finn, (9) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers:1997" by Lawrence E. Mick, (10) "The Navarre Bible: Catholic Epistles," (11) "The Twelve: The Lives of the Apostles After Calvary" by C. Bernard Ruffin, (12) "The Collegeville Bible Commentary: Luke" by Jerome Kodell, O.S.B., (13) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Luke" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (14) "The Founding of Christendom" by Warren H. Carroll, and (15) The St. Paul Center For biblical Theology Online Founded By Dr. Scott Hahn.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.