4th Sunday of Easter Year C

Acts 4:8-12

As Peter and John spoke to the people at Solomon's Portico (last week's reading) the priests, the captain of the Temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them. The teaching of Peter and John upset them because the apostles were teaching that in Jesus there was resurrection of the dead—a doctrine specifically rejected by the Sadducees. Peter and John were seized and held overnight in jail (meanwhile, the numbers of men who believed grew to five thousand). The next day Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin. What we hear today is Peter's address to the Sanhedrin, after which Peter and John were released.

8. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said: This bears out Jesus' prediction in Mt. 10:17-20: "Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils. When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you." The Holy Spirit is mentioned 4 or 5 times in Matthew and Mark, 13 times in Luke and 41 times in Acts. "Leaders of the people and elders: John Paul II spoke of the "sanhedrins of the contemporary world." He said that they are "each and every person who rejects divine truth; they are systems of human thought, of human knowledge; they are the various conceptions of the world and also the various programs of human behavior; they are also the different forms of pressure, so-called public opinion, mass civilization, media of social communication, which are materialist or secular agnostic or anti-religious; they are, finally, certain contemporary systems of government which—if they do not totally deprive citizens of scope to profess the faith—at least limit that scope in different ways, marginalize believers and turn them into second-class citizens…and against all these modern types of the Sanhedrin, the response of faith is always the same: 'We must obey God rather than men.'"
9. If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a cripple, namely, by what means he was saved, Today, the Holy Spirit gives to some a special charism of healing so as to make manifest the power of the grace of the risen Lord. But even the most intense prayers do not always obtain the healing of all illnesses. Thus St. Paul must learn from the Lord that "my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." And that the sufferings to be endured can mean that "in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions." The Church tries to carry out the command of Christ "to heal the sick" by taking care of the sick and by accompanying them with her prayer of intercession particularly through the sacraments and in an altogether special way through the Eucharist, the bread that gives eternal life and that St. Paul suggests IS CONNECTED WITH BODILY HEALTH in 1 Cor. 11:30.
10. then all of you and all the people of Israel should know that it was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, We sometimes read in Scripture that Jesus was raised by the Father, but this refers to him as man, just as those passages on the other hand, which say that he rose by his own power, relate to him as God. Up to the point of Calvary, men had been taught by preaching. After Calvary, they would be taught by His Resurrection, which became the central truth of apostolic preaching. in his name this man stands before you healed. Luke must have had Psalm 115 in mind when he shows Peter attributing the healing of the cripple to Jesus and not to himself: "Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name give the glory."
11. He is 'the stone rejected by you, the builders, The Psalmist's depiction of the leaders of Israel as "builders" is here reinforced by the setting: the priestly leaders of the Sanhedrin supervised the building of the Herodian Temple in Jerusalem, which was under continual

construction from 19 B.C. until A.D. 63. which has become the cornerstone.' This is from Psalm 118 and means that they rejected Jesus who became the cornerstone of the Church of the New Covenant. The cornerstone holds the whole structure together. Luke is trying to show that in Jesus all messianic promises have been fulfilled. The rejection of the Messiah is a tragedy described as the builders of Jerusalem discarding a stone that God would make the honored cornerstone of a new and living Temple.
12. There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved." We are all obligated to confess our faith where silence would mean its implicit denial, disrespect for religion, an offence against God or scandal to their neighbor. Mt. 10:32 says "Every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven." According to the Hebrew root, the name of Jesus means "savior." The name was not given accidentally nor by the judgment or will of man, but by the counsel and command of God through the angel, Gabriel. The evil spirits fear his name, in his name his disciples heal the sick, perform signs and wonders, drive out demons and administer Baptism, and the Father grants all they ask in this name. It is interesting that the Apostles NEVER addressed him by this name. They called him "Lord." However, the Gospel writers, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, doing their work after the Ascension, refer to "the Holy Name of Jesus."

1 John 3:1-2

Having taught about repentance and re-ordering of our lives to follow Our Father's plan, John now teaches what it means to be a part of God's covenant family. Affirming the present reality of God's love in making the Christians "children of God" has three consequences: 1) Christians do not belong to the world, which failed to receive Jesus. 2) Christians will lead lives of holiness like Christ. 3) Christians are confident of an even greater salvation in the future.

Beloved: A fundamental doctrine of John's writing is that of the Christian's sonship with God.

1. See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. When God gives someone a name he is not simply conferring a title but is causing the thing that the name indicates. Therefore, to be children of God is an essential feature of the Christian life and not just a metaphorical title, or a legal fiction or adoption human-style. By nature we are creatures of God because He is our Creator, but by grace, THROUGH BAPTISM, we have become part of God's family. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. The world did not recognize Jesus as the Son of God and therefore cannot recognize Christians as children of God. Just as Jesus was God clothed in human form—disguised, we might say—so Christians are children of God but that identity is not obvious to all.
1. Beloved, This greeting in the middle of the selection signals intimate and intense communication. John is working hard to communicate his message that right here in the midst of whatever trials or fears or setbacks we are experiencing, right now we belong to God! we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. Philippians 3:21 says: "He will give a new form to this lowly body of ours and remake it according to the pattern of his glorified body." We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. The sixth beatitude proclaims, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Pure in heart" refers to those who have attuned their intellects and

wills to the demands of God's holiness, especially in the areas of CHARITY, CHASTITY, AND ORTHODOXY OF FAITH. There is a connection between purity of heart, body and of faith. The risen Christ will be seen clearly only at the end of time—our individual time or all time. Then, when we see Christ face to face, we will recognize how like Christ we are.

John 10:11-18

In the ancient Middle east, shepherds did not "drive sheep, they led them. The sheep were very close to the shepherd, almost like pets. They knew the voice of their own shepherd, and would only follow him. The shepherd led them to food and water; he protected them from predators; he searched for them when they were lost. Jesus is our Good Shepherd. He provides for us, protects us, saves us from danger. This reading follows a dispute with some Pharisees over the healing of a blind man on the Sabbath within a few days of the celebration of the rededication of the Temple on the feast called Hannukah. On this feast a passage from Ezekiel 34 was customarily read which vilified the shepherds of Israel whose misconduct had brought on the punishment of Israel and the destruction of the Temple in 587 B.C. "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been pasturing themselves! Should not shepherds, rather, pasture sheep? I SWEAR I AM COMING AGAINST THESE SHEPHERDS. I WILL CLAIM MY SHEEP FROM THEM!" In declaring that He is the Good Shepherd, Jesus is making good on this oath that God had sworn to claim His sheep. The corrupt shepherds are, in this case, the Pharisees who confront Him and claim that His miracles must be the work of evil. As a consequence, by declaring Himself the Good Shepherd, Jesus says in effect, "I myself will pasture my sheep," just as God had said to Ezekiel.

Jesus said:
11. "I am the good shepherd. This "I am" statement is a reference to the name which God revealed to Moses from the burning bush on Mt. Sinai. In Exodus 3 when Moses asked God what he should tell the people of Israel if they should ask the name of the God Who had sent him, God replied, "This is what you should tell the Israelite: I AM sent me to you." A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Jesus is so committed to the welfare of each one of his sheep that he is willing to die for them. According to St. John Chrysostom, here Jesus is speaking of his Passion, making it clear this would take place for the salvation of the world and that he would go to it freely and willingly… St. Gregory comments: "He gave his life for his sheep, and he gave his Body and Blood in the Sacrament to nourish with his flesh the sheep he had redeemed."
12. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf The wolf is a traditional symbol of spiritual enemies. coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. St. Augustine asks, "Who is the hireling? He who sees the wolf coming and flees. The man who seeks his own glory, not the glory of Christ; the man who DOES NOT DARE TO REPROVE SINNERS. You are the hirelings; you have seen the wolf coming and have fled…because you held your peace; and you held your peace, because you were afraid."
13. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep.
14. I am the good shepherd, This meant that not only did he have the necessary skills to do the job, but he also had a quality of love and gentleness. and I know mine and mine know me, The sheep of a village were kept in a common fold, whence each shepherd would call out his own sheep and lead them away to pasturage. Because most of the sheep were kept for their wool, they were often with their shepherd for years and there was a rapport that

existed between the sheep and the shepherd and the sheep would heed no voice but that of their own shepherd.

15. just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. Jesus meant not only on behalf of them, but also in the stead of them. The sacrificial lambs offered through the centuries were sin-bearers. The priest of the Old Law would lay his hand over the sheep in order to indicate that the one to be sacrificed would be carrying the sins of the people. Jesus willingly took on sin for the sake of the new life he would bestow after the Resurrection.

16. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. This refers to the Gentiles, who are gathered into the Messiah's flock alongside the restored sheep of Israel. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. Jesus Christ is the supreme Shepherd over the one universal Jewish-Gentile Church. The spiritual authority of other shepherds like Peter and the apostles is derived entirely from Christ, who gives disciples a share in his saving mission to different degrees. The Apostle's Creed mentions the four marks of the Church as "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic."

17. This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. Jesus shows that of his own free will he will give himself up to death for the sake of the flock, the Church, and then he will rise again. His death is neither accidental nor unforeseen; nor does He speak of His death apart from His glory; nor of the laying-down of His life without taking it up again. If he had died without resuming His life, His function would have ceased after His sacrifice; He would have been only a beautiful memory.

18. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father. While the surrender of His life and the taking up of His life was spontaneous, it was also a consequence of an appointment and an ordinance, which He received from the Heavenly Father when He became man. The Father did not will that His Son should perish, but rather that He should triumph in THE GREATEST POSSIBLE ACT OF LOVE.

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1)The Commentary Notes of Tim Gray, (2) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2003" by Aelred R. Rosser, (3) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Acts of the Apostles" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (4) "Catechism of the Catholic Church," (5) "The Navarre Bible: Acts Of The Apostles," (6) "Life Of Christ" by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, (7) Homily of John Paul II given on April 20, 1980, (8) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 1997" by Lawrence E. Mick, (9) "Workbook For Lectors And Gospel Readers:1991" by Graziano Marcheschi with Nancy Seitz Marcheschi, (10) "The Navarre Bible: Catholic Epistles" (11) "Jerome Biblical Commentary," (12) "The Letters Of John And Jude" by William Barclay, (13) "The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken & Marie Finn, (14) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of John" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (15) "The Navarre Bible: St. John," (16) "The Gospel of St. John, A Catholic Bible Study" by Stephen K. Ray, (17) The St. Paul Center For Biblical Theology Online Founded By Dr. Scott Hahn, and (18) "Christian Initiation And Baptism In The Holy Spirit" by Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague.

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