Easter Sunday Year C

Today is the solemnity of solemnities, the greatest feast on the liturgical calendar! Today we bask in the glory of the resurrected Lord and we will continue to do so for the 50-day season of Easter, which culminates in the celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. During the rest of the liturgical year, the first reading is taken from the Old Testament but during Easter the first reading comes from the Acts of the Apostles, the wonderful account of the early Christian community's struggles and triumphs.

Acts 10:34a, 37-43

This reading is part of the sermon Peter preached to the house of Cornelius which included his extended family and servants or slaves. Just before this God had given Peter a vision instructing him to include the Gentiles in his evangelizing. Cornelius and his house are all Gentiles and are the first non-Jews to be Baptized according to Acts.

34a. Peter proceeded to speak and said:
37. "You know what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, John's baptism is taken as the starting point of Jesus' ministry. In Acts 1:22 when they chose a replacement for Judas, it had to be somebody who had been in their company "from the baptism of John until the day he (Jesus) was taken up from us."
38. how God Whenever Peter says "God" in this homily, he means the Father. anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. This anointing took place at his Baptism designating him as the Messiah. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, That Peter attributes such oppression to the devil strengthens the image of the kingdom of God as a rule that must do battle with a counter-kingdom run by Satan and his demonic minions. for God was with him. When the Old Testament said that "God was with someone," it always meant as an active presence. It was an expression for God's guidance and protection.
39. We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. All the way from Galilee to Jerusalem.
40. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. This was a figurative expression for crucifixion. This man God raised on the third day The number three in Hebrew numerology is the number of completion. and granted that he be visible,
41. not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, The witnesses to the resurrection were not indiscriminate or accidental. who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. This was a true resurrection as a ghost does not eat and drink. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared on numerous occasions to his disciples. Fulton J. Sheen counted 11 recorded appearances. According to tradition, the first appearance was to Christ's own mother, Mary. While this event is not recorded in the Scriptures, it would explain why Mary was not at the tomb on Easter morning because she knew that her son had already left it.
42. He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. Christ is Lord of eternal life. Full right to pass definitive judgment on the works and hearts of men belongs to him as redeemer of the world. He "acquired" this right by his cross. The Father has given "all judgment to the Son." Jesus can forgive BECAUSE he is the judge. Actually, all men will appear before him twice to render an account of their lives—of their thoughts, words, deeds and omissions. The

first judgment will take place when each of us departs this life, for then he is instantly placed before the judgment-seat of God, where all that he has ever done or spoken or thought during his life shall be subjected to the most rigid scrutiny. This is called the particular judgment. People will either go directly to heaven, to hell or to purgatory. (The smallest drop of Christ's blood is sufficient to obtain salvation for all the sins of all the people who will ever live. However, sin entails for us a double consequence: not only does it deprive us from communion with God, but it also exhibits an unhealthy attachment to created things—this is called the "temporal punishment" of sin. Christ forgives our sins and through his blood, restores our communion with God, but we must still be purified of our attachment to creatures. This purification can only be accomplished through a purging, either in this world or the next, from such attachments. This purging can be accomplished in this world, through a spirit of fervent charity, or in the next, through bathing in God's consuming fire of love. Consider how Moses did not begin by talking to God face to face. Rather, God made Himself present through the angel in the burning bush because Moses was not yet ready to see God. Through his trials, Moses grew in closeness to God until they did speak face to face.) The second judgment occurs when on the same day and in the same place all men shall stand together before the tribunal of their Judge.. At this time there will only be heaven or hell. This is called the general judgment.
43. To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him Belief is more than just acceptance, it is total commitment; not to a concept, but to Jesus Himself. will receive forgiveness of sins through his name." Here the speech recalls the witness of the Old Testament prophets that all who believe in him (Jews or Gentiles) will receive forgiveness through his name. Forgiveness comes through the invocation of Christ's name in Baptism.

Colossians 3:1-4

This reading from St. Paul features one of his favorite themes: that the life of the Christian is a repetition of the life of Christ.

Brothers and sisters:

1. If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. The "right hand of God" is an expression from Ps. 110:1. It implies his position of lordship and complete victory!
2. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. The Second Vatican Council said: "In their pilgrimage to the heavenly city Christians are to seek and relish the things that are above but this involves not a lesser, but a greater commitment to working with all men to build a world that is more human. Work, family relationships, social involvements—every aspect of human affairs—should be approached in a spirit of faith and done perfectly, out of love, for the true Christian always has his sights set on God. His outlook is supernatural. He works in this world of ours, which he loves passionately; he is involved in all its challenges, but all the while his eyes are fixed on heaven.
3. For you have died, St Paul reminds the people of Colossae that they are dead to sin and selfishness in Christ. and your life is hidden with Christ in God. By Baptism Christians have been raised to a new kind of life, a supernatural life, whereby they share, even while on earth, in the glorious life of the risen Jesus. This life is at

present spiritual and hidden but it is so important that Jesus himself chose to spend the greater part of his life on earth living like an ordinary person: he was the son of a tradesman. It is true that the supernatural value of our lives does not depend on accomplishing great undertakings. Rather it is to be found in the faithful acceptance of God's will in welcoming generously the opportunities for small, daily sacrifice.

4. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory. This refers to his Second Coming. His return will initiate the general resurrection of the dead when the bodies of the righteous will radiate the glory of the Lord. It is interesting to note that the early Christians did not use the word "bury" as they placed their dead in the catacombs in Rome. Rather, they "deposited" the body until its final bodily "withdrawal" at the end of time with the coming of Christ.

John 20:1-9

None of the Evangelists describes the actual Resurrection itself, for it was witnessed by no one. The gospels and I Corinthians 15:4-7 witness to the fact of the Resurrection, however, by the testimony to the empty tomb and the appearances of the Risen Christ to His disciples.

1. On the first day of the week, This is Sunday, the first day of the Jewish week. It is the day the Church celebrates the Paschal Mystery, the "Lord's Day" and, according to the apostolic tradition, the day of Jesus' Resurrection from the dead. Mary of Magdala Mary, from the town of Magdala, was a devoted disciple of Christ, who was delivered of demonic possession and whose love for Jesus carried her all the way to the Cross. She is rightly called "the apostle to the Apostles" for her bit of reportage that first Easter dawn. came to the tomb early in the morning , while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. Matthew 28:2 writes that "there was a mighty earthquake as the angel of the Lord descended from heaven. He came to the stone, rolled it back, and sat on it. In appearance he resembled a flash of lightning while his garments were as dazzling as snow." Note that the stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out, but to let others in to see that he was gone.
2. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, This is John the evangelist himself. and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." The empty tomb is the indisputable fact of Easter morning as testified to even by the Roman soldiers who guarded the site. The disappearance of Jesus is the first indication that he has risen as he said.
3. So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb.
4. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; The fourth Gospel makes it clear that, although the women, and specifically Mary Magdalene, were the first to reach the tomb, the Apostles were the first to enter it and see the evidence that Christ had risen . Bearing witness to this will be an essential factor in the mission which Christ will entrust to them: "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem…and to the end of the earth."
5. he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. John was younger and while he arrived first, he deferred to Peter by letting him enter the tomb first. This is more than a polite gesture, as it reflects his deference to the preeminent honor and authority that Jesus has bestowed on Simon. A statistical analysis of the Gospels and the Acts shows that among the Twelve the name of Peter occurs no less than 195 times. The Apostle who comes next in prominence is St. John, with only 29 references to his name.

6.When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, In the Greek it would seem to indicate that the clothes were flattened, deflated, as if they were emptied when the Body of Jesus rose and disappeared—as if it had come out of the clothes and bandages without their being unrolled, passing right through them. This would explain the clothes being "fallen", "flat", "lying", which is how the Greek literally translates the scene after Jesus' Body—which had filled them—left them.
7. and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. No thief would have taken the time to unwrap Jesus' corpse and fold his burial clothes neatly in the tomb. In any case, the grave robbers of antiquity usually stole the expensive linens and left the body behind, not the other way around. The Shroud of Turin is thought by many to be the burial cloth of Christ mentioned here. It is 14'3" in length and 3'7" in width. It was not wound around mummy style but shows the body of a man about 5' 11" tall who weighed about 175 pounds reclining on the length of the cloth which is then brought up over the front of the body. Those who have studied the Shroud found that the cloth had to be removed other than by natural means, since blood clots would have smeared or broken, especially at the back area where maximum pressure existed. The scientists claim that the body was not moved, unwrapped or rewrapped. There is also a small, bloodstained linen grave cloth that has been venerated in the Cathedral in Oviedo in Spain called the Sudarium. Documents suggest that St. Peter used the cloth after Christ's resurrection to heal the sick. In studies published in 1994 and 1997, they affirmed the overwhelming probability that the Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium of Oviedo covered the same crucifixion victim and that the only possibility that can be supported historically, biblically and scientifically is that this victim was Jesus of Nazareth.
8. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. There was some special feature about the state of the burial wrappings that caused the beloved disciple to believe. It is suggested that Jesus had passed through them without their being unrolled. The body which had formerly been covered by them had disappeared from within them, WITHOUT DISTURBING THEM! It is clear that Christ left his grave clothes behind him. We are not told what clothes he appeared in when he showed himself to his disciples but he never appeared in his grave clothes like a ghost.
9. for they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) The Commentary Notes of Tim Gray, (2) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Acts of the Apostles," (3) "Catechism Of The Catholic Church," (4) "The Navarre Bible: Acts Of The Apostles," (5) "Bible Basics" by Steve Kellmeyer, (6) "After The Resurrection" by Inside The Vatican, (7) "Life Of Christ" by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, (8) "The Acts of the Apostles" by Luke Timothy Johnson, (9) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2003" by Aelred R. Rosser, (10) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (11) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Letters of St. Paul to the Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (12) "The Navarre Bible: Captivity Epistles," (13) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of John," With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (14) "The Navarre Bible: St. John," (15) "Relics" by Joan Carroll Cruz, (16) "Sacred Blood, Sacred Image: The Sudarium of Oviedo, New Evidence for the Authenticity of the Shroud of Turin" by Janice Bennett, (17)"Catholic Bible Study: John" by Stephen K. Ray, (18) "The Founding of Christendom Vol. 1" by Warren H. Carroll, (19) "Catholic Source Book" Edited By Rev. Peter Klein, (20) "Jesus, Peter & The Keys" By Scott Butler, Norman Dahlgren and Rev. Mr. David Hess, and (21) The St. Paul Center For Biblical Theology Online founded By Dr. Scott Hahn.

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