

3rd Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14, 22-33

*After the Holy Spirit descended upon the followers of Jesus on Pentecost, Peter stood up and delivered the first sermon. It resulted in the Baptism of some 3000 converts! Today's selection is a part of that powerful preaching!*¹

14Then Peter Catholic tradition holds that Peter was lifted to an unrivaled position of honor and preeminence among the original apostles. It holds, too, that Peter was the chief shepherd and teacher of the early Church.³ He is mentioned by name in the New Testament 195 times. The Apostle mentioned next most often is John who is mentioned 29 times.¹⁶ **stood up with the Eleven,** The assembly had already chosen a replacement for Judas so Peter and the other eleven Apostles now stand as new leaders for Israel's twelve tribes.¹ **raised his voice, and proclaimed:**

22"**You who are Jews,** This speech was addressed to Jews only although they came from all over the known world.² **indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem.** This takes place on the feast of Pentecost, which is one of the three pilgrimage feasts mentioned in Exodus where all the males are to appear before the Lord God. Jerusalem is crowded with pilgrims.¹⁷ **Let this be known to you, and listen to my words. You who are Israelites, hear these words.** The overall concern is to show that God is directing history at its every turn.¹⁷

23Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, In the gospels, these deeds make up about half of what is said about Jesus.⁶ **wonders, and signs,** Peter's theme is that Jesus is the promised Messiah as demonstrated by the signs he worked and by his Resurrection. The Jewish population gathered in Jerusalem didn't need much more in the way of sacramental preparation. It was enough for Peter to simply announce that what had been believed about the Messiah had indeed been fulfilled in Christ.² **which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know.** In this verse they give Jesus' name and his works and in verse 24 they tell of his death and resurrection. These elements make up the core of the Apostolic Proclamation.¹

24This man, delivered up by the set plan The collaboration of Jewish and Roman authorities to execute Jesus was part of a divine program for our salvation.³ **and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men** The Romans who did the deed were Gentiles who were ignorant of God's law.¹ **to crucify him.** While the cross belonged to the eternal plan of God, it in no way lessens the crime of those who crucified Jesus.⁵ **But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it.**

25For David says of him: Jewish tradition is that David wrote all the psalms.¹⁷ This is part of Psalm 16. *'I saw the Lord ever before me, with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.'*

26*Therefore my heart has been glad and my tongue has exulted; my flesh, too, will dwell in hope,*

27*because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption.*

This either had to be about David or about someone else. David had died and they all knew where he was buried, so it wasn't about him. Therefore, it had to be about someone else and Jesus fits the description!⁴

28*You have made known to me the paths of life you will fill me with joy in your presence.'* This gives rise to the saying, "If you have a pulse, you have a purpose!"

²⁹My brothers, one can confidently say to you about the patriarch David that he died and was buried, and his tomb is in our midst to this day.

³⁰But since he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, Peter refers here to the covenant Yahweh made with David to continue his dynastic line forever. The oath is fulfilled in Jesus, who reigns forever from the throne of David in heaven.³

³¹he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he abandoned to the netherworld nor did his flesh see corruption. This mystery of incorruption is expressed by Jesus' rising on the third day, since Jewish tradition held that the process of bodily decay did not begin until the fourth day after death.³ Acts has been called *The Gospel of the Resurrection*.⁵

³²God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses. To the proofs from prophecy, Peter adds his own testimony on the resurrection of Jesus as well as that of the other Apostles.⁵

³³Exalted at the right hand of God, This is the place of honor, special benediction and paternal love.¹⁸ he received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured him forth, as you see and hear." Jesus received the Spirit which he poured out on his followers after he was raised up and exalted.⁴

1 Peter 1:17-21

We are privileged to hear from Peter twice today. This first letter of the first Pope continues to reflect on the implications of being baptized in Christ.¹ While the themes are remarkably the same, this letter is believed to have been written thirty years or more after the first proclamation of the Gospel in Acts and we hear a much more mature Peter than we heard in the first reading.²

Beloved:

¹⁷If you invoke as Father The *Didache*, a first century writing, tells us that the "Our Father" was recited three times a day.¹⁷ him who judges impartially according to each one's works, Through Baptism we have become children of God. But we should not presume upon our relationship with God as our Father for He is also our Judge.¹ It is true that God our Lord is infinitely merciful, but he is also infinitely just: and there is a judgment, and he is the judge.⁸ conduct yourselves with reverence The Christian who regards the Divine Judge as a Father must therefore conduct himself as a good and obedient child.⁴ during the time of your sojourning, This reminds us that we are a pilgrim people journeying through this life.¹

¹⁸realizing that you were ransomed This concept of ransom probably came from a practice that was common at the time in Asia Minor and in Greece whereby slaves were set free through a sum of money being deposited in the temple.⁸ from your futile conduct, handed on by your ancestors, Man's sins, following on original sin, are punishable by death.²⁰ (CCC 602) Delivered by God from the futile ways of their ancestors, they are expected to be out of step with their former pagan culture; so they are exhorted: "Conduct yourselves with reverence during the time of your sojourning."¹⁹ not with perishable things like silver or gold The author was thinking of perishable things with which to compare the imperishable, and chose gold and silver. These were good choices, not only because they were familiar and valuable in the first century, but because they are still familiar and valuable. But "the precious blood of Christ" surely outweighs the precious metals.⁷

¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ The life-blood of Christ is the price of our redemption! While the writing was much closer in time to the death of Jesus than we are, even so, it was still a

long time after that death. It is likely that the blood the author had in mind was both the blood of the suffering Christ and the Eucharistic wine. In this sense, the reading has a deep meaning for those who share the cup in this liturgy.⁷ as of a spotless unblemished lamb. This is the requirement for a sacrificial lamb and this points especially to the paschal lamb.⁴ When the figure of the Lamb is applied to Christ, this is a way of referring to the atoning sacrifice of the Cross and, also, the spotless innocence of the Redeemer.⁸

²⁰He was known before the foundation of the world Ransom through Christ was part of God's eternal plan of salvation.⁴ but revealed in the final time for you,
²¹who through him believe in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. The resurrection of Jesus is the basis for our faith and hope for as God raised Jesus, so God will raise us to share in Christ's glory.¹

Luke 24:13-35

¹³That very day, the first day of the week, This encounter takes place just hours after Jesus rose from the dead! two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus,

¹⁴and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred.

¹⁵And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them,

¹⁶ but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. Fulton J. Sheen suggests that what blinded their eyes was their unbelief for had they been expecting to see Jesus, they might have recognized him!¹² Jerome Kodell suggests that they suffered from spiritual blindness and that it takes faith which can be described as a gift of "new eyes," not natural visibility, to recognize the risen Lord.¹⁴ It is really the same experience that we have with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament where he is just as real and just as close to us as he was to these disciples and we too have trouble recognizing him!

¹⁷He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?"

¹⁸They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, This man was probably the brother of St. Joseph and it was his wife who stood with Mary at the foot of the cross and went with the women that morning to visit the tomb. He is also thought to be the father of the apostles Matthew and James the Less.⁹ said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?"

¹⁹And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,
²⁰how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him.

²¹But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; The discouraged travelers had hoped that Jesus would reign as King in Jerusalem and rescue their nation from Roman oppression. Their expectations are out of step with God's plan to free Israel from sin and death, not from political subjugation.¹¹ and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place.

²²Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning

²³and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. These two disciples were THERE with the other believers when Mary, the WIFE of Cleopas, and the other women brought the report that Jesus was risen!⁹

24 Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see.”

25 And he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Throughout the Old Testament are prophecies about the Messiah that are fulfilled in Jesus and reported in the New Testament. *The Jewish New Testament* lists 54 of them including several indicating that the Messiah had to die the way he did.²¹

26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”

27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures. Jesus gives an overview of salvation history from the Old Testament. His entire life was foreordained in Scripture, including his birth, ministry, death and Resurrection.¹¹ The Liturgy of the Mass invites us to read the Old Testament in light of the New and the New Testament in light of the Old. When we read this way, we see that what God says and does in the Old Testament points us to what Jesus says and does in the New, and what Jesus says and does in the New Testament sheds light on the promises and events we read about in the Old.¹⁰

28 As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. Jesus awaited their invitation. God gave to men the greatest and the most perilous gift in the world, the gift of free-will; and we can use it to invite Christ to enter our hearts or to allow him to pass on.¹⁵

29 But they urged him, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. It was their practice of hospitality that led them to this experience with Jesus. If they had not pressed him to stay with them, they never would have come to recognize him.¹

30 And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. Took...blessed...broke...gave: This is a sequence of actions that recall the Last Supper accounts. The structure of the Emmaus episode reflects the structure of the eucharistic liturgy where Jesus gives himself to the Church in word and sacrament, in the proclamation of Scripture and in the eucharistic Bread of Life.¹¹

31 With that their eyes were opened This means that they now had a deeper understanding of revelation.⁴ and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. This is another of the properties of the glorified body of Jesus for he is able to move through space with the speed of thought. It is called “agility.”¹³

32 Then they said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?”

33 So they set out at once They could not keep the good news of finding Jesus to themselves! The Christian message is never fully ours until we have shared it with someone else.¹⁵ and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying,

34 “The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!” This is one of the wonderful UNTOLD stories in the Scriptures!

35 Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread. The “Breaking of the Bread” was a kind of code term in the early Church for the celebration of the Eucharist.² Notice that the two disciples are not at all upset at the loss (again) of their leader. They have discovered Jesus’ Real Presence in the Eucharist! The person-to-person physical presence of a visible Jesus is no longer necessary because he is indeed risen and is present in the word and in the sacrament.¹⁷

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 1999" by Lawrence E. Mick, (2) The Commentary Notes of Sean Innerst and Tim Gray, (3) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Acts of the Apostles," (4) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (5) "The Acts of the Apostles" by William Barclay, (6) "The Acts Of The Apostles" by Johannes Munck, (7) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2005" by Martin Connell, (8) "The Navarre Bible: Catholic Epistles," (9) "The Twelve: The Lives of the Apostles After Calvary" by C. Bernard Ruffin, (10) "Breaking the Bread" from the St. Paul Center For Biblical Theology, (11) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Luke," (12) "Life of Christ" by Fulton J. Sheen, (13) "Catholic Source Book" Edited by Rev. Peter Klein, (14) The Collegeville Bible Commentary: "Luke" by Jerome Kodell, (15) "The Gospel Of Luke" by William Barclay, (16) "Jesus, Peter & The Keys" by Scott Butler, Norman Dahlgren and Rev. Mr. David Hess, (17) The St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology Online founded by Dr. Scott Hahn (18) "Smith's Bible Dictionary" by Dr. William Smith, (19) "The Collegeville Bible Commentary: 1 Peter" by Jerome H. Neyrey, S.J., (20) "Catechism of the Catholic Church," and (21) "Jewish New Testament Commentary" by David H. Stern.

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