

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

“The Easter Experience and the Call to Repentance”

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The Apostles of Jesus, emboldened by their resurrection experience, were filled with the Spirit of God to act in His name and call people to repentance. The first reading today from Acts 3:13-15, 17-19, presents Peter’s speech in the portico of Solomon, just after he and John had healed the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. Since the Jews gathered around them in this part of the temple, Peter used the moment to proclaim to the people who the real healer was; it was neither he, Peter, nor John, but Jesus, the Son of God whom they killed. He challenged them for their rejection of Christ and called them to repentance.

He accused them of delivering up Jesus whom “the God of our fathers”- Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have glorified by referencing Exodus 3:6,15 where God referred to his name with the above title. He accused them of denying the “Holy and Righteous One,” referencing Isaiah 43:14, Mark 1:24 and John 6:69, where the Redeemer and Jesus respectively are declared the Holy One of God. And finally, he accused them of killing the “author of life” or the “prince/leader of life”, that is, “the one who leads into life.” Although Peter says they acted in ignorance; however, they have delivered up, denied, and killed Jesus the Son of God, the Redeemer, and Prince of Life. Therefore, they must repent (*metanoéō*) and have a serious change of mind and heart about Jesus and accept Him as God, redeemer, and Source of Life.

In the Second Reading from 1 John 2:1-5, the author speaking as a parent demonstrates how much Christ loves us and invites Christians to respond to this love by keeping the commandments and avoiding sins. The author acknowledges that, though we are Christians who love God and keep the commandment, we are still limited and can fall into sin. Therefore, whenever we sin, we should know that we have an advocate/paraclete (*paràklētos*) in Jesus who atones for our sins and those of the whole world (The word paraclete also refers to the Spirit in John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7). Jesus, therefore, advocates our cause before the Father even when we merit condemnation. For this reason, he offered himself on the cross that we may be free from the consequences of our sins and eternal damnation. The Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ is, therefore, the expression of love from our advocate, for which we are invited to repentance and to love God with our whole being by keeping his commandments.

The Gospel reading from Luke 24:35-48 presents Jesus’ appearance of Jesus to His disciples just after the Emmaus Experience. Jesus appears to His disciples to strengthen their faith and open their minds to understand the scriptures and His teachings. In their fear and worry about seeing a spirit, Jesus reveals to them what the glorious, resurrected body is. He showed them his hands and feet, invited them to touch him, and requested to eat with them. A spirit has no flesh and bones and cannot eat, but Jesus ate. This glorious body will be the experience of all Christians at the end when we shall be with God in our glorious bodies. Then he said, “it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise again from the dead and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Therefore, the experience of the resurrection of Christ enlightens us to our ignorance in denying and rejecting Christ, in our refusal to love Him and in our fears and worries of the uncertainties of life. However, it emboldens us to challenge ills in our society, overcome fears and worries around us, and know that we have an advocate who is always there for us even when we do not deserve him. This ultimately calls us to a life of repentance, a total turn around and change from our sinfulness into the new way of life in Christ Jesus. Sin separates us from God and makes us miss the offer of salvation. Repentance, however, restores our lost glory and places us on the path of salvation. This message is presented to us, the new Israel today. We are called to repentance so as to partake of the redemption Christ won for us through his resurrection from the dead.