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Sunday Mass Study Notes for Lectionary 48: 05-04-2025



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass Notes. This week, we will examine how the apostles were energized through God's power in the Book of Acts. In the Gospel reading, we will discover how Jesus restored Peter's position after his denial of Him during his trial. We will also examine a reading from the Book of Revelation and provide some good context to help frame the reading.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from the Book of Acts. The context is just after the story of Ananias and Sapphira, both of whom attempted to lie to the Holy Spirit of God and were struck dead. God used this event to reveal the necessity of purity in the early, vibrant, and growing church during a time when "many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles" (Acts 5:12). These events revealed how the church was both pure and potent, like God. Just before today's reading, the apostles were gathered in an area of the Jerusalem temple called Solomon's Portico (v. 12). All of the commotion brought the attention of the high priest, who arrested the

apostles and put them in prison (vv. 17 – 18). Next, "during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out" (v. 19). At daybreak, the apostles reentered the temple portico and began teaching again (v. 21). Then the high priest convened "the counsel and all the senate of Israel" (v. 21b) meaning the Sanhedrin. At this point, the officers found the apostles missing from the prison while its doors remained secured (vv. 21c – 24). During this same time, the apostles remained to teach in the temple (v. 25). Next, the officers brought the apostles voluntarily to appear before the Council (vv. 26 – 27), where today's reading begins.

First Reading:

Note: Verses 33 – 39, which were omitted from the reading, were included below.

> *Acts 5:27-41 NAS95 27 When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, 28 saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. 30 "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. 31 "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him." 33 But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them. 34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time. 35 And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. 36 "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. 37 "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. 38 "So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; 39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God." 40 They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. 41 So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.*

An essential point in the reading is about Peter, who denied Him three times during Christ's arrest and was willing to die rather than forsake his Lord again. This indicates the power of the Holy Spirit working to energize him in his role of leading the emerging church. Later in the Gospel reading, we

see how Jesus forgave and restored Peter to his position. Peter was energized by the power given to him by God. After the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2), the apostles ministered boldly and powerfully to all who would listen. Their ministry emphasized "teaching," notice that this word appears twice in verse 28. This gives evidence to the importance of the teaching going on in the church, precisely what the Jews had earlier warned them not to do. The apostles were confronted by Rabbi Gamaliel, "a teacher of the law" (v. 34a), who was none other than the Rabbi who taught Saint Paul (Acts 22:3). This teacher possessed great wisdom, to such extent that the Council accepted his profound advice (v. 40). Perhaps Gamaliel recognized the miracle that occurred when the apostles were delivered from with the locked prison. Whatever happened after the Council accepted the Rabbi's advice, even though the apostles were not charged with a crime, they were still flogged in clear violation of the Jew's own law. This was done because they had disobeyed the previous order from the high priest not to teach (v. 28).

What are some ways that we can apply this reading to our lives? We cannot and should not expect miracles like they happened in the early church. We should not expect to be delivered from conflicts arising either with civil or religious authorities. We can, however, expect to experience miracles in other ways. We can expect to see God working miraculously in our lives and in the lives of those around us to whom we are ministering. We can expect miraculous answers to our prayers in ways we may not expect. We can also expect miraculous delays in God answering our prayers. How among us hasn't proclaimed, I am glad that God didn't answer that prayer right away or in the way I expected? Second, Just because a religious group grows and succeeds doesn't mean it is a movement of God. Gamaliel mentioned the cults of Theudas and Judas of Galilee from his time. Many examples in our era include the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Islam. Any movement of God will survive, at least to the extent that His purposes are accomplished through the particular movement. God's purpose through the church will not be thwarted, and He will continue building movements of His Spirit until the Lord Jesus returns. Third, we are called to obey God rather than humans. We can expect to experience cases when we must follow God's commandments and not man's commandments. This may mean that we will bump up against the civil authorities when they establish laws that are clearly against biblical absolutes and principles. Finally, we must remember the urgent call of evangelism as elicited in these passages and in the closing words of our Lord to His apostles in the Great Commission. Our primary ministry should be to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt 28:19-20, emphasis added).

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from the Book of Revelation. The context is after the message given in

chapters 2 and 3 to the literal seven churches of Asia Minor in existence at that time. In these messages, we find many similarities between the various churches of our era. The conclusion of the messages to the churches marks the beginning of the revelation to John regarding the things which "what must take place after these things" Revelation 4e), meaning after the conclusion of the church age. John receives these messages "in the spirit" while appearing before the throne of God in heaven (Revelation 4:2). These messages continue until the end of the Book. Chapter 5 opens with the gradual unsealing of a divine "scroll," which we can regard as the title deed of all the earth. This title deed is gradually unfurled, and as this is done, a series of judgments are revealed, including judgments associated with seals, trumpets, and bowls. The scroll marked with the seven seals can be considered the overall container for all the judgments. The "unfurling" of the scroll by the sequential breaking of the seals reveals the seal judgments that release the trumpet and, finally, the bowl judgments. This symbolic expression is a handy metaphor that God used to display the pouring out of the judgments upon the world in a way that early and predominantly Jewish Christians immersed in Roman society would understand. People in this society would understand how an important document, like a deed, would be sealed by a person in authority concerning that document and how each seal would have to be broken in order for the full content of the document to be revealed. In this case, the title deed scroll is marked on both sides (Revelation 5:1), indicating that perhaps not all of the content is secret except for the material behind the portion obscured by the rolled-up area held in place by the seals. John was sad that nobody was worthy to open the seals on the scroll, but the "elder" revealed to him that the Lord Jesus alone was worthy, "the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" (v. 5). Next four spiritual creatures, seemingly types of angels, along with 24 elders (likely 12 from Israel and 12 representing the church) exclaimed a victory song about Jesus and the priestly power of His believers. "And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth" (Revelation 5:9 – 10). This leads us to verse 11, which is the opening of today's reading.

Second Reading:

> *Revelation 5:11-14 NAS95 11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." 13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." 14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.*

The big idea in the reading is that the Lord Jesus, the "Lamb that was slain" (v. 11) is worthy of

worship, whether it comes from angelic beings (four living creatures), people, or every created thing (v. 13). The Scripture is clear that "EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD" (Romans 14:11, Isaiah 45:23). In the reading the text uses the term "myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands" (v. 11) was meant to portray the largest number that could be expressed in the Greek language. The fact that God has so many creatures worshiping Him should remind us that He is worthy of our worship! The reading said that Jesus is worthy "to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (v. 12). As a divine human, Jesus is worthy of our worship, not just ours but all of creation. We need to keep Jesus' rightful position as the only One worthy to open the seals in the forefront of our minds as we remember our weaknesses and those of the servants of the Lord throughout the Bible. Jesus came for the first time as a sacrificial Lamb, which is the Gospel's good news. However, when He returns, He will be the bearer of bad news for those who don't believe. Jesus is the only One who can unveil the judgments of the seals, trumpets, and bowls. Saint Paul said, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:1).

John's vision of the exalted Lord Jesus leads us to the Gospel reading, where we will see Jesus while He is still on earth, just after His resurrection.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel reading is from John. After Jesus' resurrection, Thomas missed the first meeting of the apostles when they gathered in a locked room, only to be surprised by Jesus' entrance. However, eight days later, Jesus appeared again when Thomas saw and believed. Jesus told Thomas, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed" (John 21:29). Today's reading opens with another appearance of the Lord to the apostles this time along the Sea of Galilee.

Gospel Reading:

> *John 21:1-19 NAS95 1 After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested Himself in this way. 2 Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. 3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing. 4 But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did*

> *not know that it was Jesus. 5 So Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No." 6 And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. 7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. 8 But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish. 9 So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." 11 Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. 14 This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead. 15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." 16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep. 18 "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." 19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"*

There are two main reasons why John includes this story in the Gospel. The smaller story is about Peter's three statements, and the larger one is John's description of who Jesus is after His resurrection from the dead. Let's unpack the smaller story about Peter first.

As you may recall, one of Peter's last encounters with Jesus before His death was when he denied Jesus three times. Jesus warned Peter that this would happen (Luke 22:34), but despite this, Peter still failed to stand up for his friend. You can imagine that Peter felt pretty awful letting Jesus down during His time of need (Luke 22:62). Although Peter had an encounter with Jesus in the upper room in Jerusalem, the issue of his betrayal had not explicitly been addressed, which is why today's story is so important. In the reading, we see how Jesus asked Peter three times "if he loved him." This corresponded to the three times Peter denied the Lord Jesus on the night of His betrayal by Judas Iscariot. In Jesus' kindness, He allowed Peter to express his loyalty to Him, reinstating their relationship publicly. Interestingly, Peter and some other disciples had returned to their fishing

career, which was then interrupted by Jesus' appearance along the shore to appoint them to career ministry. Similarly, when Jesus first encountered Peter, He called them out of the fishing industry into becoming a fisher of men. Jesus was now reinforcing Peter's primary calling. Peter was now called to "shepherd" (or lead) the early church. Jesus used this occasion to publicly reinstate Peter into a right relationship with Him and reestablish his ministry leadership.

The more significant reason why this Gospel story is vital for the early church is that John wanted believers to know that Jesus manifested Himself as a real person multiple times after His resurrection. He did so in ways that showed both His humanity and His divinity. We see Jesus' humanity in that He was a real person they could see (not a ghost) and ate food with the disciples. Even after Jesus' resurrection, we see Jesus still serving His disciples by preparing them breakfast beside the Sea of Galilee. We see His divinity in how He directed the disciples to cast their net on the other side of the boat and obtain a miraculous catch. On top of that, another miracle was that the net didn't break even with such a large number of fish (v. 11). We see a sign of Peter's reverence for Jesus in that he dressed himself before he jumped into the water to be with the Lord. Another expression of Jesus' divinity was His prophecy of how Peter would eventually die a martyr's death (v. 18). You can imagine that this gave Peter some comfort and boldness in later years because he knew that Jesus had placed this mark upon his life. We saw this very clearly in the first reading in which he appeared before the Council (Acts 5:27). Peter could have thought in later years something like, if I am going to die a martyr's death, why be timid in my ministry? Additionally, since Peter knew that Jesus had predicted his martyrdom, a certain amount of comfort comes from "knowing that Jesus knows." We see in this a very intentional sense of God's sovereignty over Peter's eventual death. We, too, can find comfort in difficult circumstances by knowing that God is sovereign over everything that comes along.

Reflection Questions

1. Jesus offers this exact reinstatement to everyone who has denied the Lord. His death was the payment for the penalty that we all deserve to pay for the times in our lives in which we have denied God's ownership over our lives. What do you see in Jesus' treatment of Peter that you can apply in your relationship with Him? List a few ways you tend to be like Peter and how you can receive Jesus' forgiveness.

2. What importance does Jesus's humanity and divinity hold for believers today?

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Sunday Mass Study Notes for 04-14-2024



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes. This week Marla shares the study of the readings beginning with Acts 3 where Saint Peter explains the meaning of the death of resurrection of Jesus. The second reading in First John also clarifies the importance of our relationship to Jesus Who is our Advocate in the face of our sin. Finally, the Gospel lesson from Saint Luke relates one of the stories of Jesus' appearance to the disciples after His resurrection.

Introduction to the First Reading:

When my son Cole was a little boy, he was often oblivious to what was going on around him. I remember one time we were anticipating the visit of a beloved aunt and uncle. My husband and I spoke of it for weeks ahead of time around the dinner table. But when the day came and his aunt and uncle arrived, Cole was surprised to see them and more than a little perturbed with us. "Why didn't anyone tell me they were coming?" He wanted to know. We assured him we had spoken of it numerous times in various ways in his presence. But somehow, he didn't get the message.

Turns out the Jews were a little like Cole. They had heard of the Messiah for generations. Moses and all the prophets from Samuel on had spoken of Him saying the Messiah would come and would suffer for their sins. Yet when Jesus came on the scene, they didn't recognize Him. And when a miracle was performed in front of their eyes in the power of Jesus name, the people were astonished.

A man lame from birth was well known by the Jews who came to the temple. For as long as they could remember this man sat at the temple gate begging for money. This day, though, Peter and John, disciples of Jesus and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, healed the man (see Acts 2: 36-47). His walking and leaping and praising God caused quite a stir in the temple that day, and the people came running to the men they thought responsible for the miracle. In the first reading, Peter denies being responsible and points the people to Jesus instead. In addition, he points out that though the Jews heard the prophets, they somehow didn't understand the message. Instead of receiving the Messiah, they had disowned Him and killed Him. Devastating words! Yet it was not too late to respond. They could repent and turn to God and their sins would be wiped away and times of refreshing would come from the Lord (v. 19).

First Reading:

> *Acts 3:12-19 NAS95 12 But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. 14 But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. 16 And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. 17 And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. 18 But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;*

It is important to note that in this passage Peter is speaking to "men of Israel," i.e. Jewish people (v. 12). He appeals to their heritage of "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers" (v. 13). Then he uses multiple terms to identify Jesus, including:

- [God's] servant (v. 13
- The Holy and Righteous One (v. 14)
- The Prince of Life (v. 15)
- The one whom God raised from the dead (v. 15)

These are some strong statements about who Jesus is. When we believe in Jesus, it is because we are convicted of our need for a Savior. This leads us to repent of (or turn away from) our sins. Peter invited them to turn from their sin and return (to the Lord) so that their sins would be wiped away. This same invitation is extended to everyone who is willing to believe in Jesus.

It is possible to attend Mass, hear that Jesus died for your sins, but not fully understand the message. Peter says to repent of our sins and then to turn to God so that our sins will be wiped away and that times of refreshing will come to us. God has promised, and He always keeps his promises.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

I know shopping online is popular, fast, and convenient. However, how many of us have purchased something online and ended up with an inferior product? Sometimes I prefer to go into a store, see the product with my own eyes, and handle it and try it out with my own hands. Only then can I be sure that what I am purchasing is the real deal.

St. John the apostle testified that Jesus was who He claimed to be—the Son of God and Savior of the world. And how did John know that? Because he was an eyewitness to the life and ministry of Jesus and with Peter and James was part of Jesus' inner circle. Here is how St. John spoke of his

relationship with Jesus:

> *1 John 1:1-4 NAS95 1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life– 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us– 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.*

St. John had seen Jesus with his own eyes, heard Him with his own ears, and touched Him with his own hands. He knew from firsthand experience the real Jesus and wanted others to know Him, too. However, false teachers—the Gnostics—were teaching error, calling the body evil, denying the true humanity of Jesus, and living immoral lives. St. John reminded his readers that those who claim to be real followers of Jesus would live as Jesus lived not like the Gnostics, indulging in immorality. He explains:

> *1 John 1:5-8 NAS95 5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

This idea is expanded in the second reading.

Second Reading:

> *1 John 2:1-5 NAS95 1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. 3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:*

The big idea in this reading is the importance of having a personal relationship with Jesus, rather

than living hypocritically by claiming knowledge of Him with no fruit. If we claim to know Jesus and do not follow His commands, we are liars, and His truth is not in us (v. 4). Anyone can claim to be a Christian, but John gives a clear guideline to assess ourselves. Keeping Christ's commands shows the sincerity of our claim to be a Christian. Obedience from the heart is a byproduct of coming "to know Him,"and an outward manifestation of an inward reality.

Even while we are in Christ, we recognize the ongoing struggle we have with sin. The good news is that when we sin we have an advocate—an advocate is someone who has authority and uses that position on our behalf. God hates sin and as a good judge must punish sin. The Bible says the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23A). But Jesus is the propitiation for our sins (v. 2). Propitiation means "satisfaction." God is propitiated—satisfied—with Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus pleads our case before the Father. He died and shed His blood for our sins so we don't have to. And when we truly believe in Jesus, we will walk in His ways, demonstrating that our faith is real.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

My son Cole was not the only one who failed to fully comprehend what was going on right before his eyes. The disciples, too, often heard and saw things that they did not fully understand until later. When Jesus said, "Destroy this temple and I will raise it up the third day, some thought He was talking about a building. It wasn't until after Jesus was raised from the dead that the disciples understood He was referring to his death and resurrection.

Maybe that's why two disciples on the road to Emmaus didn't recognize the resurrected Jesus when He joined them along the way. The disciples told their fellow traveler about the Nazarene, who was crucified three days prior and how puzzled they were in the report from eyewitnesses that His tomb was empty. What could it mean? Then Jesus said to them:

"*O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures*." (St. Luke 24: 25-27)

Their hearts burned within them when He spoke, but it wasn't until later, when the three of them

broke bread together, that the disciples recognized Jesus. A moment later, He vanished from their sight. They hurried to Jerusalem to find the apostles and to testify that they had seen the risen Lord. As they spoke, Jesus appeared in their midst.

Gospel Reading:

> *Luke 24:35-48 NAS95 35 They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. 36 While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst. 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." 40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. 41 While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; 43 and He took it and ate it before them. 44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 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 again from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things."*

Notice what great effort Jesus made to demonstrate that the One who stood before them was not a spirit or a conjuring of their grieving imagination. It was the real flesh and bone person of Jesus. They could actually see and touch the nail prints in His hands and feet. And in a final convincing proof, Jesus ate a piece of fish, something no dead person or disembodied spirit could do. It was really Jesus, raised bodily from the dead.

Because He was raised from the dead, we have the hope of a new life also, not just in heaven someday but here and now (Romans 6:1-8). The disciples were to proclaim to the whole world the message of repentance, forgiveness, and resurrection to new life. And now it's our turn to proclaim this life-giving news to our generation.

Reflection Questions

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1. Even when we read the Bible, we sometimes miss the message. What message about Jesus did you learn from the reading today that you hadn't noticed before? How can understanding that message change how you live today?

2. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we have the hope of new life also, both now and for eternity. What is one way you can begin to share that message with those around you?

Sunday Mass Study Notes for 05-01-2022



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass. This week we will examine the readings first looking at how the apostles were energized through God's power in the Book of Acts. We will see in the Gospel reading how Jesus restored Peter's position after his denial of Him during his trial. We will also examine a reading from the Book of Revelation and give some good context to help frame the reading.

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Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from the Book of Acts. The context is just after the story of Ananias and Sapphira both of whom attempted to lie to the Holy Spirit of God and were struck dead. God used this event to reveal the necessity of purity in the early, vibrant and growing church during a time when "many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles" (Acts 5:12). These events revealed how the church was both pure and powerful, like God. Just before today's reading the apostles were gathered in an area of the Jerusalem temple called Solomon's Portico (v. 12). All of the commotion going on eventually brought the attention of the high priest, who arrested the apostles and put them in prison (vv. 17 – 18). Next, "during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out" (v. 19). At daybreak the apostles reentered the temple portico and began teaching again (v. 21). Then the high priest convened "the counsel and all the senate of Israel" (v. 21b) meaning the Sanhedrin. At this point, the officers found the apostles missing from the prison while its doors remained secured (vv. 21c – 24). During this same time the apostles remained teaching in the temple (v. 25). Next, the officers brought the apostles voluntarily to appear before the council (vv. 26 – 27) where today's reading begins.

First Reading:

Note: Verses 33 – 39 which were omitted from the reading were included below.

Acts 5:27-41 NAS95 27 When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, 28 saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. 30 "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. 31 "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him." 33 But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them. 34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time. 35 And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. 36 "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. 37 "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. 38 "So in the present case, I say to you,

stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; 39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God." 40 They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. 41 So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

An import point that comes out in the reading is about Peter, who during Christ's arrest denied Him three times, was willing to die rather than to forsake his Lord again. This is indicative of the power of the Holy Spirit working to energize him in his role in leading the emerging church. Later in the Gospel reading, we will see how Jesus forgave and restored Peter to his position. Peter was energized by the power given to him by God. After the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2), the apostles ministered boldly and powerfully to all who would listen. Their ministry emphasized "teaching," notice that this word appears twice in verse 28. This gives evidence to the importance of the teaching going on in the church, exactly what the Jews had earlier warned them not to do. The apostles were confronted by Rabbi Gamaliel, "a teacher of the law" (v. 34a), who was none other than the Rabbi who taught Saint Paul (Acts 22:3). This teacher possessed great wisdom, to such extent that the council accepted his profound advice (v. 40). Perhaps Gamaliel recognized the miracle that occurred when the apostles were delivered from with the locked prison. Whatever happened, after the Council accepted the Rabbi's advice even though the apostles were not charged with a crime they were still flogged in clear violation of the Jews own law. This was done because they had disobeyed the previous order from the high priest not to teach (v. 28).

What are some ways that we can apply this reading to our lives? We cannot and should not expect miracles in the same way that they happened in the early church. We should not expect to be delivered from conflicts arising either with civil or religious authorities. We can, however, expect to experience miracles in other ways. We can expect to see God working in miraculous ways in our lives and in the lives of those to whom we are ministering around us. We can expect miraculous answers to our prayers in ways that we may not expect. We can expect miraculous delays in God answering our prayers. How among us hasn't proclaimed, I am glad that God didn't answer that prayer right away or in the way I expected? Second, Just because a religious group grows and succeed doesn't mean that it is a movement of God. Gamaliel mentioned the cults of Theudas and Judas of Galilee from his time. There are many examples in our era, including the Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, and Islam. Any movement of God will survive at least to the extent this His purposes are accomplished through the particular movement. God's purpose through the church will not be thwarted, and He will continue building movements of His Spirit until the Lord Jesus returns. Third, we are called to obey God rather than humans. We can expect to experience cases in our life when we will need to follow the commandments of God and not the commandments of man. This may mean that we will bump up against the civil authorities when they establish laws that are clearly

against both biblical absolutes and biblical principles. Finally, we must remember the urgent call of evangelism as elicited in these passages and in the closing words of our Lord to His apostles in the Great Commission. Our primary ministry should be to, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt 28:19-20, emphasis added).

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from the Book of Revelation. The context is after the message given in chapters 2 and 3 to the literal seven churches of Asia Minor in existence at that time. In these messages, we find many similarities in the various churches that exist in our era. The conclusion of the messages to the churches marks the beginning of the revelation to John regarding the things which "what must take place after these things" Revelation 4e), meaning after the conclusion of the church age. John receives these messages "in the spirit" while appearing before the throne of God in heaven (Revelation 4:2). These messages continue until the end of the Book. Chapter 5 opens with the gradual unsealing of a divine "scroll," something that we can regard as being the title deed of all the earth. This title deed is gradually unfurled, and as this is done a series of judgements are revealed, including seals judgments, trumpet judgments, and bowl judgments. The scroll marked with the seven seals can be thought of as the overall container for all the judgements. The "unfurling" of the scroll by the sequential breaking of the seals reveal the seal judgments that thereafter release the trumpet and finally the bowl judgements. This symbolic expression is a handy metaphor that God used to display the pouring out of the judgements upon the world in a way that early and especially Jewish Christians immersed in the Roman society would understand. People in this society would understand how an important document like a deed would be sealed by a person in authority concerning that document and how each seal would have to be broken in order for the full content of the document to be revealed. In the case the title deed scroll is marked on both sides (Revelation 5:1) which indicates perhaps that not all of the content is secret except for the material contained behind the portion obscured by the rolled-up area held in place by the seals. John was sad that nobody was worthy to open the seals on the scroll, but the "elder" revealed to him that the Lord Jesus alone was worthy, "the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" (v. 5). Next four spiritual creatures, seemingly types of angels, along with 24 elders (likely 12 from Israel and 12 representing the church) exclaimed a victory song about Jesus and the priestly power of His believers. "And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth" (Revelation 5:9 – 10). This leads us to verse 11 with which we open today's reading.

Second Reading:

Revelation 5:11-14 NAS95 11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." 13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." 14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.

The big idea in the reading is that the Lord Jesus, the "Lamb that was slain" (v. 11) is worthy of worship, whether it comes from angelic beings (four living creatures), or people, or every created thing (v. 13). The Scripture is clear that "EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD" (Romans 14:11, Isaiah 45:23). In the reading the text uses the term "myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands" (v. 11) was meant to portray the largest number that could possibly be expressed in the Greek language. The fact that God has so many creatures worshiping Him should remind us of the fact that He is worthy of our worship! The reading said about Jesus that He is worthy "to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (v. 12). As a divine human, Jesus is worthy of our worship, and not just ours but all of creation. We need to keep Jesus' rightful position as the only One worthy to open the seals in the forefront of our minds as we remember our own weaknesses as well as those of the servants of the Lord throughout the Bible. Jesus came the first time as a sacrificial Lamb, which is the good news of the Gospel. However, when He returns, He will be the bearer of bad news for those that don't believe. Jesus is the only One that can unveil the judgments of the seals, trumpets and bowls. Saint Paul said, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:1).

John's vision of the exalted Lord Jesus leads us to the Gospel reading in which we will see Jesus while He was still on earth just after His resurrection.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel reading is from John. After Jesus' resurrection, Thomas had missed the first meeting of the apostles when they gathered in a locked room only to be surprised by Jesus' entrance. However,

eight days later Jesus appeared again, at which time Thomas saw and believed. Jesus told Thomas, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed" (John 21:29). Today's reading opens with another appearance of the Lord to the apostles this time along the Sea of Galilee.

Gospel Reading:

John 21:1-19 NAS95 1 After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested Himself in this way. 2 Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. 3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing. 4 But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 So Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No." 6 And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. 7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. 8 But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish. 9 So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." 11 Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. 14 This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead. 15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." 16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep. 18 "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." 19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

There are two main reasons why John includes this story in the Gospel. The smaller story is about Peter's three statements, the larger one is about John's description of who Jesus is after His resurrection from the dead. Let's unpack the smaller story about Peter first.

As you may recall, one of Peter's last encounters with Jesus before His dead was when he denied Jesus three times. Jesus had warned Peter that this was going to happen (Luke 22:34) but in spite of this Peter still failed to stand up for his friend. You can imagine that Peter felt pretty awful letting Jesus down during His time of need (Luke 22:62). Although Peter had an encounter with Jesus in the upper room in Jerusalem, the issue of his betrayal had not specifically been addressed which is why today's story is so important. In the reading, we see how Jesus asked Peter three times, "if he loved him." This corresponded to the three times in which Peter denied the Lord Jesus on the night of His betrayal by Judas Iscariot. In Jesus' kindness, He gave Peter the opportunity to publicly express his loyalty to Him thereby reinstating their relationship. Interestingly, Peter and some of the other disciples had returned to their fishing career, which was then interrupted by Jesus' appearance along the shore with the purpose of appointing them to career ministry. Similarly, when Jesus first encountered Peter, He called them out of the fishing industry into becoming a fisher of men. Jesus was now reinforcing Peter's primary calling. Peter was now being called to "shepherd" (or lead) the early church. Jesus used this occasion to publicly reinstate Peter back into right relationship with Him and to reestablish his leadership in ministry.

The larger reason why this Gospel story is important for the early church is that John wanted believers to know that Jesus manifested Himself as a real person multiple times after His resurrection. He did so in ways that showed both His humanity and His divinity. We see Jesus' humanity in that He was a real person that they could see (not a ghost), and He ate food with the disciples. Even after Jesus' resurrection, we see Jesus still serving His disciples by preparing them breakfast beside the Sea of Galilee. We see His divinity is the way in which He directed the disciples to cast their net on the other side of the boat and obtain a miraculous catch. On top of that, another miracle was that the net didn't break even with such a large number of fish (v. 11). We see a sign of Peter's reverence for Jesus in that he dressed himself before he jumped into the water to be with the Lord. Another expression of Jesus' divinity was His prophecy of how Peter would eventually die a martyr's death (v. 18). You can imagine that this gave Peter some comfort and boldness in later years because he knew that Jesus had placed this mark upon his life. We saw this very clearly in the first reading in which he appeared before the council (Acts 5:27). Peter could have thought in later years something like, if I am going to die a martyr's death why be timid in my ministry? Additionally, since Peter knew that Jesus had predicted his martyrdom there is a certain amount of comfort that comes from "knowing that Jesus knows." We see in this a very intentional sense of God's sovereignty over Peter's eventual death. We too can find comfort in difficult circumstances through knowing that God is sovereign over everything that comes along.

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Reflection Questions

1. Jesus offers this same reinstatement to everyone who has denied the Lord. His death was the payment for the penalty that we all deserve to pay for the times in our lives in which we have denied God's ownership over our lives. What do you see in Jesus' treatment of Peter that you can apply in your own relationship with Him? List a few ways in which you tend to be like Peter and how you can receive Jesus' forgiveness as well.

2. Of what importance does the humanity and divinity of Jesus hold for believers today?

Sunday Mass Study Notes for 04-18-2021



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes. This week Marla shares the study of the readings beginning with Acts 3 where Saint Peter explains the meaning of the death of resurrection of Jesus. The second reading in First John also clarifies the importance of our relationship to Jesus Who is our Advocate in the face of our sin. Finally, the Gospel lesson from Saint Luke relates one of the stories of Jesus' appearance to the disciples after His resurrection.

Introduction to the First Reading:

When my son Cole was a little boy, he was often oblivious to what was going on around him. I remember one time we were anticipating the visit of a beloved aunt and uncle. My husband and I spoke of it for weeks ahead of time around the dinner table. But when the day came and his aunt and uncle arrived, Cole was surprised to see them and more than a little perturbed with us. "Why didn't anyone tell me they were coming?" he wanted to know. We assured him we had spoken of it numerous times in various ways in his presence. But somehow, he didn't get the message.

Turns out the Jews were a little like Cole. They had heard of the Messiah for generations. Moses and all the prophets from Samuel on had spoken of Him saying the Messiah would come and would suffer for their sins. Yet when Jesus came on the scene, they didn't recognize Him. And when a miracle was performed in front of their eyes in the power of Jesus name, the people were astonished.

A man lame from birth was well known by the Jews who came to the temple. For as long as they could remember this man sat at the temple gate begging for money. This day, though, Peter and John, disciples of Jesus and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, healed the man (see Acts 2: 36-47). His walking and leaping and praising God caused quite a stir in the temple that day, and the people came running to the men they thought responsible for the miracle. In the first reading, Peter denies being responsible and points the people to Jesus instead. In addition, he points out that though the Jews heard the prophets, they somehow didn't understand the message. Instead of receiving the Messiah, they had disowned Him and killed Him. Devastating words! Yet it was not too late to respond. They could repent and turn to God and their sins would be wiped away and times of refreshing would come from the Lord (v. 19).

First Reading:

Acts 3:12-19 NAS95 12 But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. 14 But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. 16 And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. 17 And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. 18 But the things which God announced beforehand

by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

It is important to note that in this passage Peter is speaking to "men of Israel," i.e. Jewish people (v. 12). He appeals to their heritage of "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers" (v. 13). Then he uses multiple terms to identify Jesus including:

- [God's] servant (v. 13
- The Holy and Righteous One (v. 14)
- The Prince of Life (v. 15)
- The one whom God raised from the dead (v. 15)

These are some strong statements about who Jesus is. When we believe in Jesus, it is because we are convicted of our need for a Savior. This leads us to repent of (or turn away from) our sins. Peter invited them to turn from their sin and return (to the Lord) so that their sins would be wiped away. This same invitation is extended to everyone who is willing to believe in Jesus.

It is possible to attend Mass, hear that Jesus died for your sins, but not fully understand the message. Peter says to repent of our sin and then to turn to God so that our sins will be wiped away and that times of refreshing will come to us. God has promised, and He always keeps his promises.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

I know shopping on line is popular, fast, and convenient. However, how many of us have purchased something on line and ended up with an inferior product? Sometimes I prefer to go into a store, see the product with my own eyes, and handle it and try it out with my own hands. Only then can I be sure that what I am purchasing is the real deal.

St. John the apostle testified that Jesus was who He claimed to be—the Son of God and Savior of the world. And how did John know that? Because he was an eyewitness to the life and ministry of Jesus and with Peter and James was part of Jesus' inner circle. Here is how St. John spoke of his

relationship with Jesus:

1 John 1:1-4 NAS95 1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life– 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us– 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

St. John had seen Jesus with his own eyes, heard Him with his own ears, and touched Him with his own hands. He knew from firsthand experience the real Jesus and wanted others to know Him, too. However, false teachers—the Gnostics—were teaching error, calling the body evil, denying the true humanity of Jesus, and living immoral lives. St. John reminded his readers that those who claim to be real followers of Jesus would live as Jesus lived not like the Gnostics, indulging in immorality. He explains:

1 John 1:5-8 NAS95 5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

This idea is expanded in the second reading.

Second Reading:

1 John 2:1-5 NAS95 1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. 3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:

The big idea in this reading is the importance of having a personal relationship with Jesus, rather than living hypocritically by claiming knowledge of Him with no fruit. If we claim to know Jesus and do not follow His commands we are liars and His truth is not in us (v. 4). Anyone can claim to be a Christian but John gives a clear guideline to assess ourselves. Keeping Christ's commands shows the sincerity of our claim to be a Christian. Obedience from the heart is a byproduct of coming "to know Him" and an outward manifestation of an inward reality.

Even while we are in Christ, we recognize the ongoing struggle we have with sin. The good news is that when we sin we have an advocate—an advocate is someone who has authority and uses that position on our behalf. God hates sin and as a good judge must punish sin. The Bible says the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23A). But Jesus is the propitiation for our sins (v. 2). Propitiation means "satisfaction." God is propitiated—satisfied—with Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus pleads our case before the Father. He died and shed His blood for our sins so we don't have to. And when we truly believe in Jesus, we will walk in His ways, demonstrating that our faith is real.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

My son Cole was not the only one who failed to fully comprehend what was going on right before his eyes. The disciples, too, often heard and saw things that they did not fully understand until later. When Jesus said, "Destroy this temple and I will raise it up the third day, some thought He was talking about a building. It wasn't until after Jesus was raised from the dead that the disciples understood He was referring to his death and resurrection.

Maybe that's why two disciples on the road to Emmaus didn't recognize the resurrected Jesus when He joined them along the way. The disciples told their fellow traveler about the Nazarene who was crucified three days prior and how puzzled they were at the report from eyewitnesses that His tomb was empty. What could it mean? Then Jesus said to them:

"*O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures*." (St. Luke 24: 25-27)

Their hearts burned within them when He spoke, but it wasn't until later, when the three of them broke bread together, that the disciples recognized Jesus. A moment later, He vanished from their sight. They hurried to Jerusalem to find the apostles and to testify that they had seen the risen Lord. As they spoke, Jesus appeared in their midst.

Gospel Reading:

Luke 24:35-48 NAS95 35 They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. 36 While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst. 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." 40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. 41 While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; 43 and He took it and ate it before them. 44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 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 again from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things."

Notice what great effort Jesus made to demonstrate that the One who stood before them was not a spirit or a conjuring of their grieving imagination. It was the real flesh and bone person of Jesus. They could actually see and touch the nail prints in His hands and feet. And in a final convincing proof, Jesus ate a piece of fish, something no dead person or disembodied spirit could do. It was really Jesus, raised bodily from the dead.

Because He was raised from the dead, we have the hope of a new life also, not just in heaven someday but here and now (Romans 6:1-8). The disciples were to proclaim to the whole world the message of repentance, forgiveness, and resurrection to new life. And now it's our turn to proclaim this life-giving news to our generation.

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Reflection Questions

1. Even when we read the Bible we sometimes miss the message. What message about Jesus did you learn from the reading today that you hadn't noticed before? How can understanding that message change how you live today?

2. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we have the hope of new life also, both now and for eternity. What is one way you can begin to share that message with those around you?

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