

Act Out of Love



I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41)

High priest's point of view (no speaking in the name of Jesus)

²⁷When they had brought them in and made them stand before the Sanhedrin, the high priest questioned them, ^{28a}“We gave you strict orders [did we not?] to stop teaching in that name. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this man’s blood upon us.”

Peter’s point of view (speaking in obedience to God)

²⁹But Peter and the apostles said in reply, “We must obey God rather than men. ^{30*} The God of our ancestors raised Jesus, though you had him killed by hanging him on a tree. ^{31a} God exalted him at his right hand” as leader and savior to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins. ³² We are witnesses of these things, as is the holy Spirit that God has given to those who obey him.”

High priest’s sanctions (flogging, prohibiting)

^{40b} After recalling the apostles, they had them flogged, ordered them to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, and dismissed them.

Apostles’ joy over being punished because of their obedience (witnessing)

^{41e} So they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name.

THE FOCUS: Being Witnesses

COMMENTARY

- The First Reading speaks of what it means to give witness and its consequences.
- vv.27-28 talk about the prohibition to give witness (teaching that name, and making the religious authorities responsible for his death)
- v.29 speaks of the bold response of Peter and the apostles: “We must obey God rather than men.” The apostles’ commander in chief is God, not the high priest and Sanhedrin.
- v.30 summarizes the kerygma (content of apostles’ preaching), v.31 focusing on his resurrection = exaltation as leader and savior.

- v.31 highlights God’s purpose for us why he raises Jesus from the dead: to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins.
- vv.40-41 (also v.27) talk about the consequences of witnessing: questioning, prohibiting, further witnessing, flogging, rejoicing.

REFLECTIONS

The text speaks of the bold witnessing of the apostles in Jerusalem. The highest religious authorities (high priest and Sanhedrin) even take notice of the effects of their preaching.

Like what they have done to Jesus, they want to silence the apostles. They do not want to hear of the name Jesus anymore. The apostles justify their action. They are doing it in obedience to God, not to them (who are only men). They have taken courage to take seriously their mission and to be committed to it, even if it entails persecution.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13)
**I WILL PRAISE YOU, LORD,
FOR YOU HAVE RESCUED ME. Or ALLELUIA.**

SECOND READING (Rev 5:11-14)

Angels in heaven, glorifying Christ in heaven

^{11e} I looked again and heard the voices of many angels who surrounded the throne and the living creatures and the elders. They were countless* in number, ¹² and they cried out in a loud voice: “Worthy is the **Lamb that was slain/to receive power and riches, wisdom and**

strength./ honor and glory and blessing.”

Every creature, everywhere, blessing and glorifying Christ

¹³Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in the universe, cry out:/ “To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb/ be blessing and honor, glory and might,/ forever and ever.”/

The Four Living creatures, worshipping Christ

¹⁴The four living creatures answered, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

THE FOCUS: Slain Lamb, Now in Glory!

COMMENTARY

- One may ask why the Second Reading comes from the book of Revelation. Well, because it describes well, dramatizes well, signals well the glorification of the Christ, theologically addressed as the Lamb.
- The context is liturgy, full blast, in unison.
- In v.11, take note of the participants in the liturgy: many angels, living creatures and elders (countless). They affirm Christ’s worthiness to receive power, riches, etc...(no other being has ever received such honor).
- V.13 gives a louder celebration. Now not only angels but all creatures everywhere. New element here is the blessing and idea of eternity (for ever and ever)
- V.14 is the response for the unprecedented liturgy: Amen. The Great Amen.

REFLECTIONS

There is no other book in the New Testament that articulates the glorification of the risen Lord than the book of Revelation.

When one reads it, one should feel one is in the highest, most grandiose expression of praise and glory. *Doxology par excellence.*

GOSPEL READING (Jn 21:1-19)

Description of how Jesus appears to the apostles

^{1*} “After this, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way.

Fishing, all go, but no catch

²Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee’s sons,*

and two others of his disciples. ^{3*} ^bSimon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We also will come with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Appearance of Jesus without being recognized

^{4c}When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. ^{5d}Jesus said to them, “Children, have you caught anything to eat?” They answered him, “No.” ⁶So he said to them, “Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something.” So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish.

Apostles’ recognition

⁷So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord.” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. ⁸The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish.

The catch and the meal

^{9*} “When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you just caught.” ¹¹So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three* large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, “Come, have breakfast.” And none of the disciples dared to ask him,* “Who are you?” because they realized it was the Lord. ^{13g}Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish. ^{14*} ^hThis was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead.

The love (Three times)

^{15*} 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, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶He then said to him 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, “Tend my sheep.” ¹⁷He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you **love** me?” Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, “Do you **love** me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I **love** you.” [Jesus] said to him, “Feed my sheep.

Peter’s end

^{18*} ^jAmen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” ^{19k}He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, “Follow me.”

THE FOCUS: On Loving Jesus

COMMENTARY

The text is about the appearance (revelation) of Jesus after his resurrection.

His appearance is in the context of the fishing of the apostles.

Jesus is not readily recognized, although he makes a miracle (miraculous catch of fish). It was John who recognizes, "It is the Lord." To cement their faith, Jesus takes meal (breakfast) with them.

Right after, Jesus asks Peter the three famous questions: "Peter, do you love me?"

To love is to lead. Peter is the recognized leader of the group. Peter's love for Jesus leads to feeding the flock.

To lead is to feed.

The question and answer (repetitious) portion indicates that leadership has something to do with feeding, not just eating. They have just eaten breakfast.

REFLECTIONS

Beware of leaders who are always eating, and not feeding!

The main job of a leader according to the risen Lord is feeding. "Feed my lambs. Tend my lambs. Feed my sheep."

The leader must also be willing to be led (by God), to let God decide his destiny (his death). (vv.18-19)

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

The First Reading speaks of the courageous witnessing of Peter and other apostles to the risen Lord. The Second Reading celebrates the glory of the risen Lord. The Gospel Reading speaks of the appearance of the Lord to his apostles and his questions to Peter, "Do you love me?"

How to develop your homily

Relate your experience as a leader of the group (as a parish priest, pastor, etc.)

What do you do as a pastor? Here you may ask forgiveness from the congregation for your failures to feed them.

Feeding the flock here may mean delivering a well prepared, good and inspiring homily, not a phony one and full of baloney.

While you open up yourself regarding your failures, you also make each in the congregation realize that they too are leaders in one way or another. They should also ask the same question. Are they feeding their flocks (children, associates, workers) correctly?

Everybody in the congregation, not only the parish priest, is a leader. And therefore, everyone must be challenged to review his or her own leadership. We can do it if we really love the risen Lord.

Just a reminder to the preacher

The preacher should realize that the congregation deserves a good homily (good spiritual food).

Nowadays, enough is the garbage thrown left and right from the pulpit.

What is a good homily here?

A good homily is one that is based on the readings, takes into account the liturgical season and the present context (issues in the community and family) and the personal witnessing, conviction of the preacher. It is one that nurtures the spirit.

We are best nurtured if we have a good liturgy (good presider, good lectors and commentators and choir).

Back to the congregation

We will soon have elections (May). Let us be wary about our choices. We will be electing our leaders in the community. Are the candidates like Jesus and Peter who feed the flock? Or are they vultures who feed on the poor? Do our candidates have plans/programs to offer to fight poverty and hunger? Or are they like syndicates who fool people into their prey, promising all kinds of things and do nothing afterwards.

Leaders, we- they are supposed to love Jesus Christ and feed the flock with their wisdom, love and care and concern for the common good.

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III. OUR CONTEXT

1. In your own circle of influence, in what ways do you exercise your leadership? (HM)

