

Come and **BELIEVE...**



I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Acts 5:12-16)

^{12c} Many **signs and wonders** were done among the people at the hands of the apostles. They were all together in Solomon's portico. ¹³ None of the others dared to join them, but the people esteemed them. ¹⁴ Yet more than ever, believers in the Lord, great numbers of men and women, were added to them. ^{15d} Thus they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on one or another of them. ¹⁶ A large number of people from the towns in the vicinity of Jerusalem also gathered, bringing the sick and those disturbed by unclean spirits, and they were all cured.

THE FOCUS: On Signs and Wonders

COMMENTARY

- The text describes the successes of the early Church as a result of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (*and the descent of the holy Spirit at the Pentecost*).
- V.12 speaks of the many signs and wonders, not just **some** signs and wonders but **many** (meaning that God's deeds through the apostles are impressive. *May dating, overwhelming*)
- V.12 indicates the setting: Solomon's portico (in the Temple area).
- V.13 indicates the good standing of the apostles due to their wonderful works. The apostles are highly regarded by the people.
- V.14 speaks of the increasing numbers of believers (not just many conversions, but great numbers).
- V.15 may not be taken literally. The shadow of

Peter falling on one or another indicates how great Peter is. This may be an exaggeration of how the sick can be cured.

- V.16 repeats the ideas contained in vv.14 and 15 (great numbers and the sick/possessed).
- Take note the miracles done by Peter are like those done by Jesus (healing).
- The signs and wonders are the miracles done by Peter. These miracles continue the work of Jesus' healing ministry (and also exorcisms).

REFLECTIONS

Right after the resurrection of Jesus, the apostles through the leadership of Peter go on mission. Through them, God performs miracles (*signs and wonders*).

Because of this, they attract people to believe in Jesus. Here people are not just drawn to Jesus the risen Lord, but also to the apostles, to the community of believers. They come to belong to the early Church (primitive Church).

What kind of believers are we?

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24)

GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD FOR HE IS GOOD, HIS LOVE IS EVERLASTING.

SECOND READING (Rev.1:9-11,12-13,17-19)

John, the witness, the visionary, the author

⁹I, John, your brother, who share with you the distress, the kingdom, and the endurance we have in Jesus, found myself on the island called Patmos* because I proclaimed God's word and gave testimony to Jesus. ¹⁰I was caught up in spirit on the Lord's day* and **heard** behind me a voice as loud as a trumpet, ¹¹which said, "Write on a scroll* what you see and send it to the seven churches.

Jesus Christ, the son of man

¹²"Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and when I turned, I saw seven gold lampstands ¹³and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man,* wearing an ankle-length robe, with a gold sash around his chest.

John's reaction of his vision and the giving of his mission (to write)

¹⁷When I caught sight of him, I fell down at his feet as though dead." He touched me with his right hand and said, "Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, ¹⁸the one who lives. Once I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever. I hold the keys to death and the netherworld." ¹⁹Write down, therefore, what you have seen, and what is happening, and what will happen afterwards."

THE FOCUS: On the Vision of the Risen Christ

COMMENTARY

- The text is not continuous as you can see. The verses are the selections of the authorized liturgists.
- Well, the text as a whole describes the experience of John (not necessarily the apostle), a distressed believer of the Risen Lord who openly tried to testify to his faith.
- As exile in Patmos (Greece), John hears and sees the Lord. Jesus touches him with his right hand and introduces himself as the first and the last (alpha and omega), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.
- Dead, now alive. Holding keys (last judge). Significant in this revelation is John's being asked to write.
- Previously disciples are only asked to give witness, to heal, etc. If ever they wrote, it is because they volunteered to do so.
- This time, this disciple John is asked to write. God tells him to write what he has seen (past), what is happening (present) and what will happen (future) (V.19).

REFLECTIONS

The resurrected Christ manifests himself not only in Jerusalem, but also in the island of Patmos, away from Israel. The resurrected Christ manifests himself not only to the original apostles, but also to the believers and suffering witnesses who might not have seen Jesus.

Still, in times of persecution, exile, seclusion, the risen Lord does not fail to give assignment to his faithful one. He asks him to write, not just to one community, but seven.

GOSPEL READING (Jn 20:19-31)

Setting: Sunday and Jesus' appearance

¹⁹ J On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ K When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.* The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ L [Jesus] said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²² M And when he had said this, he breathed

on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit. ²³ N "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

The Doubting Thomas

²⁴ Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ O So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Setting: Another Sunday, with Thomas

²⁶ P Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Q Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe."

The Believing Thomas

²⁸ R Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ S Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." ³⁰ T Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of [his] disciples that are not written in this book. ³¹ U But these are written that you may [come to] believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

THE FOCUS: Believing

COMMENTARY

- In this text, we must observe how things change when Jesus appears. In vv.19-20, the disposition of the disciples changes from fear to joy. (They were afraid... they rejoiced...) In v.21, Jesus repeats his greeting of peace and now he is sending the holy Spirit (in v.22) to forgive or retain sins. Here there is a change from being away (hiding) to being personally with the people effecting God's forgiveness (mission).
- In vv.24-25, the first to be notified of Jesus' resurrection and appearance is Thomas, but he is skeptic. For him, it is not to see is to believe, but to touch is to believe. Very requiresome.
- In vv.26-27, here Jesus appears again for the sake of Thomas. He knows his needs.
- He appears in a similar setting, manner (*doors locked, appearing, greetings of peace*).
- Jesus has his attention on Thomas and encourages him to change from disbelief to faith.
- In v.28, Thomas changes as desired. He expresses his conversion (belief) through these simple but all encompassing words unexpressed by any other disciple, "My God and my all!"
- The last three verses propose change (conver-

2ND SUNDAY OF EASTER (C)

April 03, 2016

sion to believe) to the readers. The last line gives the reason: to have life in his name.

REFLECTIONS

The resurrected Christ appears to his fearful disciples, to strengthen them, to change their fear into joy, their inactivity into mission (forgiveness).

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

As usual, we try to seek the common elements of the three readings to help us focus our homilies.

The First Reading describes the successful activities of the apostles (particularly Peter) and the response of many people. They become believers.

The Second Reading (Revelation) describes the **mission** of the exiled believer of the risen Lord, to write for the churches.

The Gospel invites us to believe in the risen Christ.

How to develop your homily

Again the preacher is tasked by the liturgical readings to make the faith in the risen Lord alive in our communities.

We presuppose that the people we are addressing to are already believers. What we are supposed to do here is to encourage, challenge our listeners to be active in their faith.

All parishioners and Christian believers must exhibit their faith through active evangelization, through healings and exorcisms, and forgiveness of sins. We Christians must represent God to the unbelieving people, hoping that they too may come to believe.

Faith in the risen Lord is not a matter of intellectual assent but active continuation of the mission of Christ in the world.

Faith in the resurrection is unthinkable without **mission**, without any effect on other people.

We must imitate the apostles, like Peter, who did his **mission**.

We must imitate John, the author of Apocalypse, to continue giving witness to the risen Lord through writing. Writing can be done not only through newsletters, but texting, developing a worthwhile website, multimedia productions, etc., reading church's documents so that the contents of

our writings will have more quality, will bring us to a higher plane.

We must have ongoing formation.

We must imitate John, the author of the gospel, who write so that we may come to believe, that we may have eternal life.

Pastors should waste more time with people willing to do mission and **evangelization**.

Pastoral councils should allot more money for the catechism and feeding programs of the parish.

The church should spend less time and money for the externals.

Parish leaders must tap potential lay leaders and spend generously for their training.

The eucharist is the visible sign of the risen Christ. He does not appear anymore in person, but through this sacrament. But his purpose remains the same to us: to give us peace, to remind us to take seriously our mission. Let the faith in the risen Lord be truly alive in our firm commitment to share in his mission.

-Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM

III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Today is also Divine Mercy Sunday.

