

Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Cycle B - April 25, 2021

OPENING PRAYER



Guide: *The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.*

All: **Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever.**

Leader: I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me and have been my savior.

All: **Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting.**

Guide: *We invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send, Lord your spirit and renew the face of the earth.

Oh God, that you have instructed the hearts of your faithful with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us through the same spirit that always enjoy her divine consolation. By Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FIRST READING [Acts 4 (8-12)]

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said:

“Leaders of the people and elders: If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a cripple, namely, by what means he was saved, then all of you and all the people of Israel should know that it was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead; in his name this man stands before you healed.

He is the stone rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.”



We read in the verses preceding this text that Peter and John shortly after receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, healed an invalid at one of the entrances to the temple in Jerusalem. Later, both are taken before the authorities, arrested, and the next day, before the Sanhedrin, Peter takes the floor and delivers the speech that is remembered in this first reading. As in all the speeches and sermons of those early times, the theme revolves around the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ ("Kerygma"), that is, that Jesus has died and risen and that he is the savior that God has sent for all humanity.

Those men who had been forced by panic to remain behind closed doors no longer feel fear to challenge the very authorities that decided the death of Jesus, and proclaimed the message that is up to all Christians to repeat, without fear or shame. Like Peter, we are called to renew the proclamation of Christ as universal savior.

Peter uses a phrase taken from Psalm 117 (the one proclaimed this Sunday): "The stone that the builders rejected is now the cornerstone." We also read this expression in other New Testament books: Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; 1 Peter 2:7.

(1) Read the other New Testament passages that speak of "the cornerstone" How are they alike or different?

(2) Read John 3:30. Do you think that in this episode of the healing of the invalid the apostles do the same as John the Baptist, or take the opportunity to increase its importance?

(3) Are you aware that we must be transparent so that others do not see us, but Christ?

(4) What attitude do you think we should take towards those who are not very discreet and are noticed in the Church and people consider them important? Is there something positive that you can take advantage of from these people?

SECOND READING [1 John 3 (1-2)]

Beloved:

See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Through Jesus Christ, we have received the greatest of gifts: divine sonship. John tells us that it is not something theoretical, a formal statement, but that it is a true reality, it is a new life that we receive from God himself, that allows us to participate in his own life, that is, that we can savor his life. same divinity.

This is something so big that there is no way we can understand it intellectually, as it is beyond the reach of our reason. That is why God is also in charge of giving us that other gift, which is faith. It is through faith that we can accept this intense truth. Those who do not have faith will never be able to understand our hope in that other life, the one that Jesus Christ has conquered for us. In that other life we will share in the glory of him, and enjoy the taste of divinity. That is why the apostle writes that "the world" has not recognized him, referring to those who do not have the faith.

But the text does not emphasize in those who do not believe, but rather in those who accept that gift of God, which is faith. John wants us to understand the serious commitment that it means for any person to accept being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We are already children of God, but we must still draw the consequences of this. We are expected to live our faith, our new identity and our ordinary life in coherence. If we do so, the day will come when, according to the apostle, we will be able to see God as He is, and we will become like Him.

(1) What strikes you the most in this text? Why?

(2) What do you imagine heaven is like? Share with the group.

GOSPEL [John 10 (11-18)]

Jesus said:

"I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep.

I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd.

This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father."



Every year, on the fourth Sunday of Easter the liturgy focuses on the figure of the Good Shepherd, regardless of the liturgical cycle. (For this reason, too, the Church remembers on this day that we should pray for more answers to God's vocational call). The text of the Gospel may change, but the theme always revolves around the image of a shepherd who is always watching over his flock and seeking the best for them.

Already in the Old Testament a similar symbol was used to refer to those responsible for the people of God, and also to God himself. When Jesus adopts this image, he wants to communicate to his disciples his strong love for them. In this year's text, Jesus highlights the low quality of mercenary shepherds, who work for wages and do not care for the sheep.

This good shepherd not only knows the members of his flock, but is even willing to give his life for them. (As indeed happened in the case of Jesus Christ). It is in the Gospel of John that the sacrifice of Jesus is best understood as an act to which he goes freely and voluntarily, moved only by love. In this text we read proof of this, when Jesus declares «No one takes my life. I give it because I want to ».

The reference to "other sheep that are not of this fold" is a clear allusion to the unborn under the mark of the Israelite inheritance, outside of the chosen people, that is, to the Gentiles, or pagans, who, as time passes added more members to the Church than those of Jewish origin ...

- (1) Read Isaiah 40:10-11 and Ezekiel 34:11-16. Compare with the text of this gospel
- (2) Read Ezekiel 34:1-10. What stands out to you in this text?
- (3) Do you think that the job of pastor corresponds only to the clergy (priests and deacons)? Why?
- (4) Is there a person close to you who could be seen as a lost sheep, without a shepherd? Do you think you could start a job of making them come back to the herd? What help would you need?
- (5) Read John 11:52 and try to relate it to the part of "sheep from another fold" mentioned in the 2nd paragraph.
- (6) What are the qualities of a good shepherd?
- (7) Which of these qualities would you need to cultivate and / or develop?

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father ...**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*

Deacon José Moronta DeaconJMoronta@stmarktampa.org