

FROM IGNORANCE TO UNDERSTANDING

3rd Sunday Easter

Year B

by Dcn. Tom McConnell

Ac 3:13-15,17-19; Ps 4; 1Jn 2:1-5a; Lk 24:35-48

Now I know, brothers, that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did...[Acts 3:17] The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments...[1Jn 2:3] Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. [Lk 24:45]

Ignorance yields to knowledge...and knowledge leads to understanding....

Several years ago, Brenda and I were attending a Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus social dinner and program at a local restaurant in Dunlap. On the front porch of this restaurant were several antique tractors. We had with us our then two-year old granddaughter, Sophia Marie, who, when she visits Brenda's parents, absolutely loves to ride on her Paw Paw's John Deer Tractor. Well, when she spied the old tractors out front as we entered the restaurant, you can imagine how determined Sophia was to sit in the seat and pretend to ride each one of those tractors. I promised her she would do just that after the dinner program when we were leaving for home.

Sure enough, as we were heading for the car, she reminded me of my promise. So, I began to put her on each tractor seat, listening to her make the putt-putt sound of the engine as she gleefully pretended to ride down the road and across the fields. When I tried

to pry her from the last seat, she of course refused to go, demanding that she be allowed to “...ride some more, Poppy...ride some more!”

Well, Poppy wasn't about to be outsmarted by his two-year old granddaughter...I would get her to relinquish her grip on that last tractor by using some reverse psychology. So, I said, “Sophia, that's fine, Mimi and Poppy are going to get in the car and go back to Chattanooga. You can stay here and ride as long as you want...and then you can sleep right here on the tractor seat.”

Without hesitating, she cocked her head, looked quizzically at me and said: “Poppy, are you cwazy?” Now, less than a year earlier, she would have squealed in delight at the thought of spending the night on a tractor! But now, that idea was “cwazy” to say the least. Sophia's earlier ignorance had yielded to knowledge which had led to understanding. She realized that no fun to be had by playing on that tractor could possibly offset her being left alone at night in a strange place.

Today's Scriptures take us through this evolution of ignorance—knowledge—understanding...beginning with the

cupable ignorance of the Jews [whom Peter accuses of denying Christ, the Righteous One]...to the fruitful knowledge of Christ's followers [who keep His commandments]...to the enlightened understanding of His disciples [who will preach salvation to the world]. Don't each of us, in our daily lives, constantly encounter this evolution of ignorance, knowledge, and understanding? Yes, we confront this continually with our friends, in our family, and from our co-workers. You see, we may know *about* a friend, know *about* a family member, know *about* a co-worker; but do we truly *know* that friend, that family member, that colleague? For it's only by *knowing* that we can gain insight and understanding.

How many of us thought we really knew our spouse before the wedding? How many of us were still getting to really know, much less understand, our spouse even at our first anniversary? We actually don't begin to *know* our spouse until a deep friendship finds its place alongside our intimacy...until we are best friends as well as lovers. For marital understanding to take root, our spousal love

must become sacrificial and not self-serving...our love for each other must be unconditional for mutual understanding to blossom.

Well, the same analogy can be applied to our relationship with Christ. Until Jesus is our best friend...until our love for Him is sacrificial and unconditional, we cannot truly know or understand Him. And Saint John, in his epistle today, tells us that the way we can be sure that we know Christ is to keep His commandments. Our relationship with our Lord and Savior must a personal one. We need to talk to Him—daily, read His word—often, learn His ways, walk with Him every day of our life, suffer with Him, rejoice with Him, carry our cross with Him. He will give us understanding like He did the apostles in today’s Gospel. He will light our way. He will fill us with His Spirit Who enlightens us and guides our way of living.

Now, to truly know and understand Christ is also to know and understand His Church, the Body of Christ. And how do we know Holy Mother Church? We know and understand Her through fellowship with Her members, through our regular attendance at

mass, through the study of Her faith [which is our faith], and even through our sacrificial tithing.

The Church, in turn, loves us by Her Motherly protection from the torrents of sin, humanism, secularism—She’s our saving arc in such worldly floods that would destroy us. She loves us by Her preservation of Truth and the Sacred Deposit of Faith [In his epistle to Timothy [1Tim3:15], St. Paul calls the Church the foundation and pillar of all truth]. Holy Mother Church loves us through Her liturgy by which She stirs us to reverence, awe, and praise of God. And finally, the Church loves us through Her Sacraments—those visible signs of God’s invisible grace that saves us. In our Baptism, Holy Mother Church loves us with God’s indelible seal marking us eternally as His own and opening the doors of His kingdom to each of us. In our Confirmation, God seals us with the Holy Spirit Who empowers us to stand strong in our faith and to witness and proffer that faith to others. In Her Sacrament of Reconciliation, God heals us through His forgiveness and absolution of sin offered to the penitent and contrite heart. Holy Mother Church preserves and

sanctifies for us the sacred institutions of marriage and holy orders.

She offers healing with Her Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

Oh, how Jesus wishes that we all would fall head over heels in love with Holy Mother Church...the Body of Christ...who nourishes and sustains us as a mother hen, her brood of chicks. St. Augustine tells us that the Church is the Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven...that the saints, living and dead, reign with Him so that they themselves [we ourselves] are His kingdom [all Saintly Early Father

references are taken from *Living the Mysteries* by Scott Hahn and Mike Aquilina].

And finally, that we would truly *know* and *understand* Holy Mother Church, we turn to that defining sacrament which is the source and summit of our Catholic faith—the Eucharist...the real presence of the risen Christ—the true body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus. St. Clement of Alexander calls the Eucharist the milk of Mother Church...life sustaining food from Her own substance...and when we say “Amen!” in agreement to the minister’s declaration “The body/blood of Christ” and consume Jesus, St. Clement says that in this communion, flesh is then joined to flesh for whom the

Word became flesh. To further the unity image we foster when we feed on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, St. Augustine says that if we are the body of Christ and its members, then we are the mystery placed on the Lord's table, and we are the mystery that we receive! We become the Lord's bread...we are made into His body, and through His mercy we are what we receive. [Hahn and Aquilina] Or in the words of modernity, we become what we eat.

Brothers and sisters, we must not be ignorant of Holy Mother Church...we must, through our belief and the practice of our faith, be one in Christ Jesus...and in our unity, we will *know* Holy Mother Church...and in our knowledge, we will grow in our love and *understanding* of Her.

May God Bless You All!