

Sunday, April 26, 2020

Third Sunday of Easter

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Acts 2:14, 22-33

2nd Reading: 1:17-21

Responsorial: Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-11

Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

Knowing Jesus More Deeply through Reading and Reflecting on Scriptures

Hear these words! (Acts 2:14)

Have you ever heard the word *kerygma*? It's a Greek word that means "the proclamation." The Church uses this word to describe the core message that Peter and the apostles preached after Jesus' resurrection. Today's first reading—from Peter's Pentecost sermon—is one clear example of the Church's *kerygma*, the key events that are at the heart of our faith:

- Jesus worked "mighty deeds, wonders, and signs" while he was on the earth (Acts 2:22). The Gospels are filled with stories of Jesus healing people, raising the dead, calming storms, casting out demons. All these miracles showed that Jesus was no ordinary man.
- Jesus was "delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). Jesus' death was not just a travesty of justice or an accident of fate. No, it was part of God's plan. Jesus went to his death willingly, an innocent victim of the sin that was in the world, so that he could deliver us from that sin.
- "God raised him up" (Acts 2:24). Jesus is now risen from the dead. He broke the chains of death and revealed the promise of resurrection—both for himself and for everyone who comes to him.
- Having ascended to heaven, Jesus has poured out "the promise of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:33). Because of that Spirit, every one of us can experience God's life and love active within them. We can know forgiveness of our every sin, we can be filled with the hope of eternal life, and we can receive the power to live a new life here and now.

This *kerygma* is not just a set of truths to be believed. It's the story of our redemption. It's a series of promises that we can *experience*: Physical and spiritual healing. Forgiveness. Eternal life. The Holy Spirit.

This is your heritage. This is everything Jesus died to secure for you. This is how much he loves you and treasures you.

"Jesus, I am astounded at your love and generosity—toward me!"

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. The first reading opens with these words of Peter: *Jesus the Nazorean was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through him in your midst ... This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him. But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death. The reading closes with these words: God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses. Exalted at the right hand of God, he received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured him forth.*
 - How do you think Peter, in spite of being an uneducated fisherman, got such a gift to proclaim the Gospel?
 - If we believe that we as Catholics have the ability to proclaim the Gospel through the power of the Spirit that dwells in us, what keeps us from sharing it with others? How can you overcome some of these obstacles?
 - Do you believe that if you are willing to spend time, prior to the start of Mass, reflecting on the Mass readings, perhaps, like the Emmaus Road disciples, your heart will burn as the Scriptures are read and explained at Mass?
2. The responsorial psalm opens as follows: *Keep me, O God, for in you I take refuge. ... O LORD, my allotted portion and my cup, you it is who hold fast my lot ... even in the night my heart exhorts me.* It continues as follows: *I set the Lord ever before me; with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed. Therefore, my heart is glad and my soul rejoices, my body, too, abides in confidence; because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor will you suffer your faithful one to undergo corruption. You will show me the path to life.*
 - In what ways do the opening words allow the psalmist to keep his mind and heart fixed on the Lord?
 - How can you, like the psalmist, take some steps to do the same?
 - The ending words of the psalm are quoted by Peter in the first reading as a prophetic word on Jesus' resurrection from the dead. In what ways are these words related to Jesus' resurrection?
3. The second reading opens as follows: *Beloved: If you invoke as Father him who judges impartially according to each one's works, conduct yourselves with reverence during the time of your sojourning, realizing that you were ransomed from your futile conduct...not with perishable things like silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ.* It ends as follows: *He was known before the foundation of the world but revealed in the final time for you, who through him believe in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*
 - Do you believe that reflecting more on the fact that *you were ransomed from your futile conduct ... with the precious blood of Christ* will help you to *conduct yourself with reverence*? Why or why not? Any examples?
 - In what way has the fact that Jesus has been *revealed in the final time for you* allowed you to *believe in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God*?
4. The Gospel reading describes the Emmaus Road meeting with Jesus by two of his disciples after his resurrection. During the initial encounter, he said to them, *"Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"* Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures. Later on that night, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.
 - The Scriptures do more than teach us about Jesus—they reveal him to us. Why do you think that in spite of all that Jesus said to the disciples using the Scriptures that referred to him, they still did not initially recognize him?
 - Why do you believe that it was not until Jesus *took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them* that he *was made known to them*? How do the events described in this reading apply to us today, especially at Mass?
5. The meditation begins with these words: "Have you ever heard the word *kerygma*? It's a Greek word that means 'the proclamation.' Today's first reading ... is one clear example of the Church's *kerygma*, the key events that are at the heart of our faith." It goes on to describe how Peter's words proclaims various aspects of the *kerygma*. It ends with these words: "This *kerygma* is not just a set of truths to be believed. It's the story of our redemption. It's a series of promises that we can *experience*: Physical and spiritual healing. Forgiveness. Eternal life. The Holy Spirit. This is your heritage. This is everything Jesus died to secure for you. This is how much he loves you and treasures you."
 - The meditation describes four "aspects of the *kerygma*" in "Peter's Pentecost sermon." Which of these four are most important to you?
 - The ending words tell us that "This *kerygma* is not just a set of truths to be believed. It's the story of our redemption." Which of the truths described in the meditation have you personally experienced? In what way?

Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord for all he has done for you through his passion, death, and resurrection. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

"Jesus, I am astounded at your love and generosity—toward me!"

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]