

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER – A

On this third Sunday the Church continues her proclamation of the Lord's resurrection. In the gospel reading we have the beautiful reading of the two disillusioned disciples on their way to Emmaus and how after having the scriptures explained to them they were able to recognise their risen Lord in the breaking of the bread. In the first reading we have Peter's homily 'on the day of Pentecost' quoting King David saying, 'what he foresaw and spoke about was the resurrection of the Christ.' In the second reading we listen to Peter, in his letter, encouraging his readers to have faith and hope in God through all Christ achieved.

The **First Reading** is from Acts of the Apostles. This New Testament book is part two of a history of the rise of Christianity, the first part being the gospel according to Luke. They became separated when, about 150 A.D., Christians wanted the four gospel accounts bound together in one volume. The author, Luke, is a Syrian from Antioch, a doctor of non-Jewish origin, who was a close friend of Paul accompanying him on his second and third missionary journeys. Luke collected a great deal of evidence from a variety of sources which he edited. The book deals with the primitive Jerusalem community under Peter's leadership, the spread of Christianity to Samaria, to the gentile peoples and the early days of Christianity in Antioch. From chapter 13 Luke deals with Paul's three missionary journeys and ends with Paul a prisoner in Rome.

The reading, 2.14,22-33, is part of a homily given by Peter on Pentecost Sunday, the first of seven recorded in Acts. The Apostles strengthened and enlightened by the Holy Spirit go out to face the crowds in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost and Peter for the first time proclaims that Christ is risen. He explains what Jesus did while on earth and how he was given over into their hands 'by the deliberate intention and foreknowledge of God,' and was put to death but God has raised him to life. Peter then quotes the patriarch David whose descendant, the Christ, 'was not abandoned to Hades' and 'whose body did not experience corruption.' This Christ has been raised on high by God and 'he has received from the Father the Holy Spirit' whom Christ promised he would send. What the crowds witness is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. What Peter proclaimed all those years ago is proclaimed today in this reading.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 15.1-2,5,7-11, is a prayer of confidence in God after the words of Peter. God is my prize, with him I shall stand firm and rest in safety he will not leave my soul among the dead, in his presence I shall find eternal happiness.

The **Second Reading** is from the first letter of St Peter. This is one of the 'universal' letters or Catholic Epistles which are addressed to the whole Church rather than to one particular community like the Pauline letters. The letter is attributed to Peter because his name is mentioned in the opening verse of the letter but his authorship is still unproven. He writes from Rome (Babylon 5.13) to the churches of Asia Minor (Turkey). The purpose of the letter is to help its readers' faith in time of trial Christians must suffer patiently like Christ in time of trial. The letter is also a valuable summary of apostolic theology. The reading, 1.17-21, teaches us that while we are living away from our home, that is heaven, we must be 'scrupulously careful' about our behaviour remembering the death of Christ is the ransom that has been paid for our salvation. Through all Christ achieved we can have faith in God 'who raised him from the dead and gave him glory for that very reason – so that you would have faith and hope in God.'