

## THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER - B

In this Sunday's gospel reading we see the disciples finding it very difficult to believe that it is truly Jesus standing before them. Then, as with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus explains to them 'that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms, has to be fulfilled.' Jesus tells them 'that in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all nations.' The Apostles began this work and we continue it today. In the first reading from Acts, Peter tries to explain to the Jewish people in Jerusalem, that the death of Jesus was part of God's eternal plan. We, too, in our sinfulness, helped in bringing about Jesus' death and now we must repent by beginning a new path in life following Jesus' teaching. The second reading, continuing from St John, has a similar teaching to Acts but goes further in showing that Christ died for all peoples.

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, 3.13-15,17-19, is from the very early days of the Church and Peter is trying to show his fellow Israelites that it is the God of their ancestors 'who has glorified his servant Jesus' by raising him from the dead. His death was not the end as they thought, our God raised Jesus from the dead and Peter says he and his fellow disciples are witnesses to this fact. Although the Israelites acted in ignorance in condemning Jesus to death Peter shows this was all part of God's plan foretold in their scriptures. Now they and we too, 'must repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.' We turn to God by giving up our sinful habits and beginning anew.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 4.2,4,7,9, is an evening prayer as the last verse shows, and speaks of trust in God and thanksgiving to God. The first three verses show trust in God along with the response, why otherwise, would we pray 'Lift up the light of your face on us, O Lord.' The final verse can be seen as an act of thanksgiving. My going to bed with the knowledge of immediate sleep in safety is an act and prayer of thanksgiving. Trust and thanksgiving are suitable responses to Peter's homily in the first reading.

The **Second Reading** is from the first letter of St John. There are three letters attributed to John the first being the most important, possibly written at the same time as the gospel. This letter was written to the Christian communities of Asia (Turkey) because they were suffering near disintegration due to some early heresies which were afflicting the Church. In the introduction the writer says he wants to share what he has 'seen and heard', his experiences, with his readers. He picks out three main points 1. To live in the light of Christ and he lists four conditions to live such a life. 2. To live as God's children with three conditions necessary, and 3. He speaks of the source of love and faith. Love is from God so we must love, and faith in Christ Jesus is necessary to overcome the world. The letter ends with two supplementary points.

The reading, 2.1-5, is from the section of the letter where we are encouraged to walk in the light of Christ. To do this we must first break with habits of sin and even if we do sin we must not despair because now we have Christ as our advocate before the Father, by his sacrifice he has expiated, destroyed our sins. Secondly we must obey God's commandments and in doing so we will come to know God, we can never come to know him without keeping his commandments. If we do keep God's commandments we can have the joy of knowing God's love will come to perfection in us, a thought to meditate in Eastertide.