

3rd Sunday of Easter Father Ed's Homily
Theme: "Peace be with you"- Luke 24-36

The 3rd Easter Sunday's readings underscore these three themes: ignorance (1st reading), knowledge (2nd reading) and understanding of the Scripture (Gospel). In the first reading, we read of Peter's courage to confront the scribes and leaders of Israel. He pointed out to them how their ignorance led them to murder Jesus Christ, the Holy and Righteous One, the author of life. He asked them to repent so that their sins would be forgiven them and receive salvation from Jesus Christ. From this first reading, and I believe from our personal life experiences, we know that ignorance can lead to disaster/harm. St. John, in the second reading, reminds us that having a great knowledge of God and religion does not make you a true Christian. Remember, the saying that "The greatest theologians were not always the greatest saints!" A true knowledge of God is acquired through the study of God and, much better, by prayer and meditation. Those who have this knowledge are those who are able to live by God's commandments. Therefore, St. John insists that intellectual knowledge is not enough for our salvation except if it helps you to obey God's Commandments and live a life that leads you to Christ. St. Luke talks about understanding of the Scripture which is only possible through Jesus Christ. If we ask Jesus to send us the Holy Spirit to open our minds to understand Scripture, surely, he will give us that.

On this 3rd Sunday of Easter, I chose "Peace be with you" as the theme for my homily. With the ongoing war in Ukraine, Holy land, Haiti, etc., and much unrest in our world today, we must continue to pray and work for peace and love in our world. If you recall last week's Gospel reading, Jesus greeted his disciples: "Peace be with you" three times when he appeared to them in the locked room. In today's Gospel, he greeted them again: "Peace be with you." In the Old Testament, "peace" in Hebrew is "shalom." One of the names of God in the Scripture is Yahweh-Shalom, meaning the Lord is Peace. This Hebrew word has a variety of meanings namely, wholeness in all life, completeness, welfare, safety, etc. (Job 9:4; Ex 21:34). Peace also is sometimes synonymous with good health (Ps 38:4).

In the New Testament, peace in Greek is "Eirene," which often occurs with grace (Greek: "Kaira"). You will read this often in the form of greetings to the recipients of letters or messages (1 Cor 1:3; Gal 1:3).

Fellow parishioners, peace is more than absence of war. I like Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopedia's description of peace. It put it so beautifully, "Peace describes the condition of the heart and mind--within our very soul and spirit when renewed in Christ." Beloved, this kind of peace can only be found in Jesus Christ. This true peace the world needs can't be achieved through war/force. You can't buy this peace either. This peace is very profound, deeper than our affections or intellect, and can only be realized in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. This peace is what Christ wished his disciples and asked them to wish every one of his followers. It is this peace to which they were witnesses when they preached his passion, death, and resurrection.

During the celebration of the Holy Mass, prior to receiving Jesus in the Holy Communion, we also wish one another this same peace Christ wished his disciples. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal on the Rite of Peace states it clearly: "There follows the Rite of Peace, by which the Church entreats peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family, and the faithful express to each other their ecclesial communion and mutual charity before communicating in the Sacrament." We can't receive Christ in the state of grace when we are not at peace with one another and with Him. After the introduction to the Mass, the Priest invites us to recall our sins and to repent of them. All this helps us to examine our life and get rid of anything that will prevent us from receiving Jesus in the Holy Communion. It is meant to help us to be at peace with ourselves, one another, and Jesus Christ we're about to receive. Any time we extend the sign of peace to one another, let us reflect on the words and actions that go with it. When you say, "Peace be with you," remember you are wishing that person Christ's peace.

As we continue to pray for peace for our world, let us also endeavor to live it. Let me end my homily with St. Francis of Assisi's Prayer for Peace: " Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith, where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy..."

AMEN !

