

Third Sunday of Easter

First reading:

*The Apostles in the Dock
(Acts 5.28-32, 40-41))*

By the time this hearing before the Sanhedrin occurs, the apostles have already been arrested twice for proclaiming the Good News of Jesus. The first time only Peter and John were arrested, interrogated and given a warning. Now it seems to be a whole group of the apostles. They were arrested, delivered from prison by an angel - another sign that God looks after his own people - and voluntarily went to face the Sanhedrin. The task of the apostle is first and foremost to proclaim the Resurrection of Jesus and his new life, a positive message of encouragement. Is our message of Christianity to those whom we meet always a message of encouragement? Does it always set out to inspire new life? All the way through the Acts of the Apostles, we see the interplay of harassment of Christ's messengers and protection by God. Peter is arrested and is about to be executed when he is delivered from prison by an angel. Later on, Paul is imprisoned and delivered from prison by an earthquake. It is no surprise that the same harassment, mockery and persecution continue throughout the history of the Church.

Question:

What sort of hardships do I endure for the sake of Christ?

Second reading:

*The Lamb in Glory
(Revelation 5.11-14)*

The second reading from Revelation shows us a scene in the heavenly throne room, the Lamb sacrificed enthroned. In fact, this is the second half of the scene, the first half of which shows God enthroned in glory. Now we see the triumphant Lamb on the same throne, being accorded the same honours by the 24 elders and by all living creatures as were accorded to the Lord God. Note the sevenfold acclamation! Then there is a fourfold acclamation from the four animals, which already in Ezekiel's vision of the divine throne represent the solidity of the universe.

The surest indication that, already in the early Church, the Risen Christ was seen as fully equal to the Father is the equality of worship accorded to them both by the whole of creation. It is precisely as the sacrificed Lamb of God that Jesus enters into the sanctuary, seated on the throne of God and presenting the very sacrifice that we present in the Eucharist. There is no time in God, and this sacrifice is 'once and for all'. The sacrifice on our altars is no new sacrifice but is the sacrifice of obedience which Christ presents in permanence to his Father.

Question:

Has this scene of the enthronement of the Lamb any implications for real life?

Gospel: *Jesus meets his Disciples at the Lake*

(John 21.1-19).

This epilogue to the Gospel of John shows an extraordinary link at the oral tradition stage to Luke's version of the Call of the Disciples: the same unsuccessful fishing all night, the success at Jesus' command, and the commission to proclaim the gospel.

As in so many encounters with the Risen Christ, he is an awesome figure, the same person but mysteriously changed, so that they have difficulty recognizing him. In addition, it has the touching scene of Peter's restoration: a triple declaration of love and loyalty is extorted from Peter to compensate for his triple denial, and a triple commission is given to him, concluding with the repeat of his call, 'Follow me' - as the promise of his martyrdom still echoes in his ears.

While Matthew's gospel concludes with a promise that the Risen Christ will be always with his Church, this gospel paints it occurring in practice: Jesus feeds his followers at the picnic breakfast. Why the 153 fish? For the Venerable Bede it is too obvious: put together the numbers from 1 to 16, to this add 10 for the Commandments and 7 for the days of creation, and you get 153. There may be more to it than that!

Question:

Is Peter's protestation of love an example for our own recovery from sin?

How can I become more aware of Christ's presence in the Eucharist?
