

Homily Notes for Easter III B, April 15, 2018

verso por Español

Readings: Acts 3:13-15, 17-19; 1 John 2:1-5a; Gospel Lk 24:35-48

1. Summary: This Sunday's message centers on the importance of repentance. The first reading shows that the response of faith to Jesus is repentance. The second shows that we can know we are "right" with God is if we keep the commandments. The Gospel is proof that spiritual (supernatural) reality is real and that we need to be right with Jesus to be saved.

2. The first reading show that the response to the Gospel is repentance. It is the culmination of St. Peter's second message after Pentecost. Peter calls on his countrymen:

"Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away."

For the best definition of repentance see Acts 26:20. 1st step, change one's thinking to the truth. 2nd step, change one's behavior to the truth. 3rd do the correct behavior repeatedly to form godly habits of life.

3. The second reading answers the question: "How can I know that I am really right with God (How can I have assurance of salvation?)." The way we can know that we "know" (love, believe) in him is when we keep his commandments. "The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments. Those who say, "I know him," but do not keep his commandments are liars, and the truth is not in them. But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him." So much for "salvation by faith (belief) alone.

4. In the Gospel we see why we really want to be "right" with God by repenting of our sins. The Resurrection of Jesus is the proof that Jesus really is God. Therefore it is very important that "repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all nations." This means that spiritual things are real, that there will be a judgment and we will either go to heaven or hell.

5. This message highlights the need for priests. This is timely, both because of Bishop Strickland's call for a capital campaign to finance more seminarians and because next Sunday is "Shepherd's Sunday", a reflection on the importance of having good shepherds, good priests.

6. Priests are vitally important to us because there are two sacraments we cannot have if we do not have priests: The Eucharist and Reconciliation. Furthermore, the ordained priesthood is necessary to provide a well-disciplined and well-ordered Church. **They bring three functions: prophet (teaching), priest (sanctifying), and king (ruling or leading in good order).** Priesthood is called the "sacrament of orders."

7. In our time we need more committed priests very much. The Bishop's campaign is to provide a permanent endowment fund to finance more seminarians which will give us more priests. The campaign is also designed to help us in our local parish. In our case we are designating these monies for the building of Christian Education space to better educate both adults and children here at St. Boniface.

8. This morning we have a short video from Bishop Strickland highlighting the campaign. Let's watch it and then reflect briefly how we can most fruitfully participate in this campaign.

9. Reflections: This is a one in a generation opportunity to consider "capital giving". It will not occur again in the lifetime of many of us. It also allows us to move forward here at St. Boniface in the next step in developing our buildings for ministry. How much do we need more priests in our Diocese???

10. Prayer for vocations:

God our Father, You made each of us to use our gifts in the Body of Christ.

We ask that You inspire young people whom You call to the priesthood and consecrated life to courageously follow Your will.

Send workers into Your great harvest so that the Gospel is preached, the poor are served with love, the suffering are comforted and Your people are strengthened by the sacraments.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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3. The Readings:

The common theme of today’s readings is a challenge that our *faith* in the living presence of the risen Lord should strengthen our *hope* in His promises and call us to true repentance for our sins. The readings remind us that the **purpose of Jesus’ death and resurrection was to save us from our sins.** Hence they invite us to come closer to the risen Lord through repentance which then frees us to be able to live the life of love for others.

4. The first reading: In this second sermon, Peter goes on with the preaching mission begun on Pentecost in Jerusalem, and again presents Jesus as the fulfillment of all the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. He also asks the Jews to repent and to be converted so that their sins might be wiped away.

5. In the second reading, John tells us that true knowledge and love of God consist in acknowledging that Jesus is the expiation for our sins, by bearing witness to Him in our lives and by obeying His commandments. While neither today’s reading from *Luke* nor the reading from *Acts* explains how Jesus’ death and resurrection frees us from sins, John in his letter provides an explanation, calling Jesus “expiation for our sins.” This presupposes that the death of Jesus was a sacrifice, like the sacrifices prescribed in the Old Testament (Numbers 5:8). The sacrifice of Jesus makes up for sins, and so offers an opportunity for their forgiveness. Jesus continues to remain our advocate when we encounter the harsh reality of our sins in our lives. Hence John advises true Christians to approach Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins and to lead true Christian lives by obeying his commandments. We should note, also, that even to know what our sins are we need to know the Commandments, and in their detail.

6. Today's Gospel shows us how Jesus convinced his disciples of his resurrection and how he commissioned them to be his witnesses throughout the world. He prepared them to receive God's power through the coming descent of the Holy Spirit upon them, and he commanded them to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins to all nations.

7. Note in the Book of Acts how the meaning of “repentance” is developed. In St Peter’s first homily he said that they should *repent and be baptized* for the forgiveness of their sins; and that they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). In his second homily he says, “*Repent, therefore, and be converted,* that your sins may be wiped away, and that the Lord may grant you times of refreshment and send you the Messiah already appointed for you, Jesus” (Acts 3:19ff). Then at the end of his missionary work, St Paul goes even further when describing that repentance, saying in Acts 26:20, “*I preached the need to repent, to turn to God (to be converted), and to do works giving evidence of repentance.*” He requires a change of mind, identifying and admitting sin, and a change of behavior, from bad to good behavior (works) and then repeated, habitual proof! Furthermore, we are called on to “confess (our) sins to one another and pray for one another, that (we) may be healed.” This is not just a private matter that we can do on our own. Jesus, furthermore, delegated to the Apostles and their successors the power to forgive and to retain sins! (See John 20:22-23, Matt 16:19, and Matt 18:18-19). Our practice of Confession (Reconciliation) demonstrates the form that this has taken in the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

8. The seriousness of sin and God’s promise of healing is found in 1 John 1:8-10. “If we say, ‘We are without sin,’ we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing. If we say, “We have not sinned,” we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” For a sobering look at the seriousness of sin check out the serious sins passages in St. Paul, CCC 1852, n. 127. Watch for at least six references to the “forgiveness of sin” in the Eucharistic liturgy.

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10. We must note the word, “expiation.” See the Glossary of the Catechism. Expiation is the act of redemption and atonement for sin which Christ won for us by the pouring out of his blood on the cross, by his obedient love “even to the end” (Jn 13:1)(CCC 433, **616**, 1475). A simple exorcism prayer in preparation for Baptism invokes God’s help in overcoming the power of Satan and the spirit of evil (#1237). This means Christ died for our sins. In the Eucharist we offer up the Body and Blood of Jesus as an oblation (sacrificial offering).

11. We cannot pick and choose the parts we want and the parts we wish to ignore. Note that the summary of the Ten Commandments in the Catechism includes the many references to the Commandments in locations other than Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. There is much detail. And we must be informed not only by the Bible (Sacred Scripture) but also Sacred Tradition (2 Thess 2:15) and the Magisterium (teaching authority of the Church guided by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20 (know this first of all, that there is no prophecy of scripture that is a matter of personal interpretation...)).

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16. Homosexuality a critical issue: I feel it is necessary before our students go out into the summer and because of the critical timeliness of the debate on homosexuality and the recognition of “same sex unions,” in many states, to provide you with some resources from the Church on this issue. If I don’t, then I stand under God’s judgment (See Ezek 33:1-9). The current talk in the country is that this issue is “over”. I assure you, that for Christians, it most certainly is not. This may be the critical issue on which the validity of the teaching of God and the Church either stand or fall.

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1. Summary: This Sunday’s message centers on the importance of repentance. The first reading is the culmination of St. Peter’s second message after Pentecost in which he calls on his countrymen to “repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away.” Here the conversion is from disbelief in Jesus to belief in Him. The second reading that Jesus is the expiation for our sins and that the way we can know that we “know” (love, believe) in him is when we are keeping his commandments. In the Gospel we see the

proofs that Jesus gave the disciples that he was really raised bodily from the dead and that “repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all nations.”

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Which brings us to the Gospel.

1. On the evening of his Resurrection, Jesus appeared to them. He showed them that he was not a ghost by having them touch him and then he ate something. He was in his “glorified” body (See 1 Cor 15:36-49).
2. He reminded them that they had to consider all the Old Testament to understand him.
3. He then summarized, “that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name...”

How can we have an assurance of salvation? By believing (believing and obeying, see John 3:16, 3:36) and being baptized.

How can we be saved after sinning after our baptism? Through the sacrament of Reconciliation which involves 1) by admitting our sin and feeling sorry for it; 2) by confessing it to a priest; 3) by having a firm purpose of amendment; 4) by doing our penance; and 5) by providing satisfaction to restore what is possible that was caused by our sin.

Summary: In order to be saved and be with God forever we must come to faith, repent of our sins and be baptized. Then we must identify, admit, confess and do penance for our sins or they will separate us from God forever. Danger today: Presumption which is trusting in ourselves without recognizing that salvation comes from God, or of an over-confidence in divine mercy (CCC 2092, 2732). If we follow the guidelines of God in belief and repentance we can expect heavenly glory for all eternity.

Reflections on the first reading: The purpose of Jesus’ death and resurrection was to save us from our sins. The sin he is confronting here is that of the people’s having promoted the killing of Jesus and refusing to believe in Him as God’s appointed Messiah. The response he calls for is repentance and conversion.

Situation of a typical evangelical who believes in the security of salvation: Recently a young lady was reported to have said, “That party last night was so crazy, but it’s OK because this morning I reaccepted Jesus back into my life and he loves me.” Is this the way that our biblical faith says we need to deal with sin? Let us assume that some grace sins occurred at that party. Are we free or capable of just “reaccepting Jesus” into our lives? Repeatedly.

Another comment heard around is: "I like Jesus but I don't like religion." By this is meant that a person could say, I believe in Jesus and in the Ten Commandments, but not in the other parts of the Bible, like the rest of the Old Testament (especially the Pentateuch) or the Epistles of St. Paul. **Correct belief by all major Christian groups is that we have to accept all of the Bible.**