

## April 21st, 2019: Easter Sunday, Year C

*Today is the greatest feast of the liturgical year! Now for 50 days we celebrate the season of Easter, which ends with the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. During the rest of the year, the first reading is taken from the Old Testament, but during Easter the first reading comes from the Acts of the Apostles, the wonderful account of the early Christian community's struggles and triumphs.<sup>10</sup>*

### Acts 10:34a, 37-43

*Cornelius, a Roman centurion stationed in Caesarea, was attracted by the faith and high moral teachings of the Jewish people although he remained uncircumcised. Then he was visited by an angel while he was at prayer and was told to send men to Joppa to find and bring Peter to him and Peter was commanded by the Holy Spirit to go with these men, despite the age-old prohibition on Jews visiting the homes of pagans. Peter went, accompanied by six probably very dubious Jewish Christian disciples. He stayed in Cornelius' pagan household, ate at his ritually unclean table, preached Christ, and saw the Holy Spirit descend upon these pagans as soon as they believed, just as He had descended upon the Jewish Christian Apostles and disciples at Pentecost in Jerusalem. Cornelius and his household were baptized, the first Gentiles to enter the Church of Christ.<sup>5</sup>*

**34a** Peter proceeded to speak and said: Peter is preaching to Cornelius and his household. It is his first sermon to non-Jews. Our selection is a summary of Jesus' public life and the statement that Jesus Christ has been made Judge of the living and the dead.<sup>3</sup>

**37** "You know what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, John's baptism is taken as the starting point of Jesus' ministry in the writings of Luke.<sup>4</sup>

**38** show God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. This is a reference to the Baptism of Jesus where his consecration as the Messiah was revealed and his ministry was begun.<sup>2</sup> He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, Peter presents the image of the kingdom of God as a rule that must do battle with a counter-kingdom run by Satan and his demons.<sup>4</sup> for God was with him. This is an expression for God's guidance and protection.<sup>4</sup>

**39** We are witnesses This shows Luke's special focus on the apostles as witnesses.<sup>1</sup> of all that he did both in the country of the Jews (Galilee) and in Jerusalem (Judea).

**40** They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. This is a figurative expression for crucifixion taken from Dt. 21:23: "cursed be everyone who hangs upon a tree."<sup>6</sup> This man God raised on the third day This had become the usual way of referring to our Lord's Resurrection. The power by which Christ rose was that of his divine Person. The divine power and operation of the Father and of the Son is one and the same; hence it follows that Christ rose by the power of the Father and by his own power.<sup>3</sup> and granted that he be visible,

**41** not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses The witnessing includes both the things done by Jesus during his ministry and the events of his death and resurrection.<sup>4</sup> chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

**42** He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. Jesus Christ has been made Judge of the living and the dead. We proclaim this article of faith in the creed: "He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead."<sup>10</sup> Men will appear before Christ two times to render an account of their lives: of their thoughts, words, deeds and omissions. The first judgment will take place when each of us departs this life. Then all that we have ever done or spoken or thought during our lifetime shall be

scrutinized. This is called the particular judgment. Souls will go either to heaven or to hell or to purgatory.<sup>8</sup> (CCC 1021-1022) The second judgment occurs when on the same day and in the same place all men shall stand together before the tribunal of their Judge and this is called the general judgment. At this time the furthest consequences of the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life will be revealed. Purgatory will cease to exist and all men will have their souls reunited with their bodies for all eternity in either heaven or hell.<sup>8</sup> (CCC 1038-1039)

**43**To him (Jesus) all the prophets bear witness, Peter didn't go into the details of scripture because he is preaching to Gentiles.<sup>3</sup> that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name." Forgiveness comes through the invocation of Christ's name in Baptism.<sup>2</sup>

*The story of the conversion of Cornelius is important because it makes clear that Gentiles could be received into the Church without circumcision or undertaking the full obligation of the Jewish law. It also reversed the prohibition of associating with Gentiles and, in particular, of eating with them.<sup>7</sup>*

### **Colossians 3:1-4**

*Colossians is simply colossal! It is about how big Christ is! How big is that? Pascal said, "Without Christ we cannot know the meaning of life, or death, or God, or ourselves." Those are the four most important questions there are. In the first two chapters of this letter, Paul has presented the doctrine needed by the people of Colossae who were being influenced by Gnosticism, which became the source of just about all the heresies in the early Church. On the practical side, in this third chapter Paul speaks of the principle on which Christian moral conduct is based: union with Christ. This begins with Baptism and is brought to perfection by a life of prayer and by the other sacraments. In other words, because Christ is the center of reality, he must be the center of our lives.<sup>12</sup>*

#### **Brothers and sisters:**

**1**If then you were raised with Christ, The believer was baptized by immersion which was a symbol of being buried with Christ. Coming up out of the water was a symbol of being raised with Christ.<sup>9</sup> **seek what is above,** The Christian cannot rise from baptism the same man as he was when he went down into baptism; there must be a difference. Now he must set his thoughts on the things that are above. He will no longer see things as they appear to men, but rather, as they appear to God. He will, for instance, set giving above getting, serving above ruling and forgiving above avenging.<sup>15</sup> **where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.** Where Christ is enthroned in heaven and where believers are seated with him through the grace of Baptism. This must be the focus of our thoughts as we struggle to lift our minds above the concerns of the world.<sup>13</sup> This is a position of lordship and complete victory.<sup>6</sup> Since the community has been raised with Christ and freed by baptism from serving cosmic powers, they now have certain responsibilities: they are to seek out those matters which pertain to the spiritual life.<sup>14</sup>

**2**Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. This is a practical consequence of the above teaching. Our lives need to show that what we did at baptism has life-long meaning.<sup>9</sup> Work, family relationships, social involvements—every aspect of human affairs—should be approached in a spirit of faith and done perfectly, out of love. The true Christian always has his sights set on God. His outlook is supernatural. He works in this world and is involved in all its challenges, but all the while his eyes are fixed on heaven.<sup>11</sup>

**3**For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Through Baptism, the Christian has been raised to a new kind of life, a supernatural life, whereby they share, even while on earth, in the glorious life of the risen Jesus. This life is at present spiritual and hidden. Ordinary life, everyday

interests, the desire to be better and to serve others without seeking public recognition of one's merits—all this makes for holiness if done for love of God. A simple life “hidden with Christ in God” is so important that Jesus himself chose to spend 90 percent of his life on earth living like an ordinary person. The birth of the Messiah, the key event in the history of mankind, took place so quietly that the world went about its business as if nothing had happened. Jesus was a carpenter and the son of a tradesman. As we meditate on these truths, we come to understand better the logic of God. We come to realize that the supernatural value of our life does not depend on accomplishing great undertakings. Rather it is to be found in the faithful acceptance of God's will and in welcoming generously the opportunities for small, daily sacrifices. Then we will be full of hope; an optimistic and happy people and after death, we will share in the glory of the Lord.<sup>11</sup> There may be a contrast between a body being “hidden in the earth” at death and being hidden in Christ through separation from material things.<sup>6</sup>

**4**When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory. When Christ returns at his Second Coming, it will initiate the general resurrection of the dead, at which time the bodies of the righteous will radiate the glory of the Lord.<sup>13</sup>

### John 20:1-9

*When the body of Jesus was taken down from the cross it was wrapped in bandages made from the linen which Joseph of Arimathea had procured, and between the windings were strewed the myrrh and aloes supplied by Nicodemus. Then the body, swathed in the spice-strewn bandages, was placed in the inner chamber of Joseph's tomb and the entrance to that chamber was closed by a heavy circular flat stone, which was rolled in grooves from the side across the door-way.<sup>18</sup> This selection tells the story of the first discovery of the empty tomb. None of the evangelists describes the actual resurrection itself for it was witnessed by no one.<sup>6</sup>*

**1**On the first day of the week, Sunday, the first day of the Jewish week.<sup>16</sup> **Mary of Magdala** Mary was one of the women who provided for our Lord during his journeys and who stayed with him at the foot of the cross. She saw where his body was laid and now, after the obligatory Sabbath rest, she goes to visit the tomb.<sup>17</sup> There is some question as to her identity, with debate centering on the presence of three possibly distinct women: Mary of Magdala who is mentioned here, the unnamed sinner of Luke 7:36, and the sister of Martha and Lazarus. In the Eastern Church, these three persons were considered unique, different women, but in the Western Church, they were accepted as one and the same woman.<sup>19</sup> **came to the tomb early in the morning while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb.** Matthew tells us that the authorities had actually sealed the stone to make sure that no one would move it.<sup>20</sup> The fact is that the heavy stone had been rolled aside.<sup>18</sup> While Mary Magdalen was the first to reach the tomb, the Apostles were the first to enter it.<sup>17</sup> One of the most interesting observations is that there was one who was not there at all: the Blessed Virgin Mary. The ancient Christian tradition holds that it was to his mother that Christ first appeared after his Resurrection. The Blessed Virgin Mary did not go to the tomb on Easter morning because she knew that her Son had already left it!<sup>5</sup>

**2**So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, This disciple was John the evangelist himself.<sup>16</sup> **and told them,** Mary Magdalen has been called “the apostle to the Apostles” for this report on that first Easter dawn.<sup>21</sup> **“They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him.”** The disappearance of Jesus is the first indication that he has risen as he said.<sup>16</sup>

3So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb.

4They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster John was younger.<sup>17</sup> than Peter and arrived at the tomb first;

5he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. John deferred to Peter by letting him enter the tomb first. This is more than a polite gesture as it was an indication that Peter was already regarded as the leader of the Apostles.<sup>17</sup>

6When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place.

No thief would have taken the time to unwrap Jesus' corpse and fold his burial clothes neatly in the tomb. In any case, the grave robbers of antiquity usually stole the expensive linens and left the body behind, not the other way around.<sup>16</sup>

8Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, (John) and he saw

This seems to indicate that the clothes were flattened, deflated, as if they were emptied when the body of Jesus rose and disappeared—as if it had come out of the clothes and bandages without their being unrolled, passing right through them. We can understand this better when we compare this description to that of Lazarus who had to be unbound before he could walk.<sup>17</sup> and believed. This must always be John's great glory: he was the first man to understand and to believe.<sup>20</sup>

9for they did not yet understand the Scripture The Holy Spirit had not yet come to enlighten their minds to understand the content of the Word of God.<sup>17</sup> that he had to rise from the dead.

*Some of the material for this commentary is taken from: (1) "The Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Acts of the Apostle" by William S. Kurz, S.J., (2) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Acts of the Apostles," With Introduction, Commentary and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (3) "The Navarre Bible: Acts of the Apostles," (4) "The Acts of the Apostles" by Luke Timothy Johnson, (5) "The Founding of Christendom" by Warren H. Carroll, (6) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (7) "Dictionary of the Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (8) "Catechism of the Catholic Church," (9) "The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken and Marie Finn, (10) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2004" by Aelred R. Rosser, (11) "The Navarre Bible: Captivity Epistles," (12) "You Can Understand The Bible" by Peter Kreeft, (13) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Letters of St. Paul to the Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon" With Introduction, Commentary and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (14) "Colossians" by Ivan Havener, O.S.B., (15) "The Letters To The Philippians, Colossians, And Thessalonians" by William Barclay, (16) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of John" With Introduction, Commentary and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (17) "The Navarre Bible: St. John," (18) "The Sunday Epistles And Gospels" by Monsignor Patrick Boylan, (19) "Our Sunday Visitor's Encyclopedia Of Catholic History" by Matthew Bunson, (20) "The Gospel Of John" by William Barclay, and (21) The commentary notes of Sean Innerst and Tim Grey.*

*On the lighter side:*

*A young mother asked her family if any of them knew what the first words were that Jesus said after he rose from the dead. The three year old suggested: "Ta-dab!"*

*In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.*