

Notes for Next Sunday

Second Sunday of Easter

The Point of this Week's Readings

First Reading (Acts 5:12-32). Previous to this reading is the story of the deceitfulness of Ananias and Sapphira and their violent deaths. Now as the apostles continue their ministry the people are very cautious around them. BUT, this does not stop the effectiveness of their ministry and many people believe their message. The apostles' special work in verses 12-16 is the healing of many. Verses 17-32 are all about the persecution that the apostles had to endure because the religious leaders of that day were threatened by the apostles' great work.

Second Reading (Revelation 1:4-18). The opening verses are the salutation in the letter to the seven churches. It includes Jesus identifying Himself to show His authority in what is to be shared by the apostle John in this Book. Jesus means for His authority to bring comfort to John's readers. In verses 12-16 John gets a glimpse of "someone 'like the son of man.'" This is Jesus. The imagery shares many Old Testament symbols which John's readers would have clearly understood.

Gospel (John 20:19-31). In verses 19-23 Jesus appears to ten (others may well have been with them) of His disciples on Easter Eve. They are behind locked doors because they fear that the Jewish leaders will harm them too. Jesus offers them peace. He does not remind them of their failure to be there for Him when He was suffering. In fact, He blesses them with the Holy Spirit and commissions them to go out and minister to people on His behalf, forgiving sins. In verses 24-31 Jesus once more appears to the disciples, this time Thomas is with them. Jesus patiently helps Thomas believe by giving Thomas many undeniable proofs. John ends this text saying that there are many other signs not recorded but these are written that John's readers may believe.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

FIRST READING – Acts 5:12-32

¹²The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. ¹³No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. ¹⁴Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. ¹⁵As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. ¹⁶Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed.

In direct defiance of the Sanhedrin's order, the congregation met daily and openly in an area of the temple that could easily accommodate thousands at a time. The quietness and orderliness of the crowd, as well as the non-interference from the outsiders, was a miracle in itself. For the first time we hear about people coming from the towns surrounding Jerusalem. The success was phenomenal. It now seemed as though the entire population of Jerusalem and even surrounding towns would soon be won for Christ. (LL)

5:13 No one else dared join them. Because of the fate of Ananias and his wife, no pretenders or halfhearted followers risked identification with the believers. Luke cannot mean that no one joined the Christian community, since v. 14 indicates that many were coming to Christ. (CSB)

¹⁷Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. ¹⁹But during the

night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. ²⁰ “Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people the full message of this new life.” ²¹ At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people. When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles. ²² But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, ²³ “We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside.” ²⁴ On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were puzzled, wondering what would come of this. ²⁵ Then someone came and said, “Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people.” ²⁶ At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them. ²⁷ Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. ²⁸ “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.” ²⁹ Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than men! ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. ³² We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

Throughout the Scripture the primary task assigned to the angels is the care and protection of the believers until the end of time (Ps. 91:11-12). The Lord also uses His angels to thwart the attacks of Satan against His children, as Martin Luther so beautifully puts in his morning and evening prayers: “Let your holy angels have charge over us that the wicked one may have no power over us.” A daily use of these two prayers might help us remember this important blessing. (LL)

“We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit” combines the life of the church with Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit given in Baptism (Acts 1:5, 8). The teaching of the crucified Christ, repentance, forgiveness, and life in his name will fill the world. Nothing can stop it. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

SECOND READING – Revelation 1:4-18

⁴ **John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. ⁷ Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. ⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”**

1:4 seven churches. Located about 50 miles apart, forming a circle in Asia moving clockwise north from Ephesus and coming around full circle from Laodicea (east of Ephesus). They were perhaps postal centers serving seven geographic regions. Apparently the entire book of Revelation (including the seven letters) was sent to each church (see v. 11). (CSB)

1:4 seven spirits. † The sevenfold description of the Holy Spirit in Isa 11:2: (1) of the Lord, (2) of wisdom, (3) of understanding, (4) of counsel, (5) of power, (6) of knowledge, (7) of the fear of the Lord. (CSB)

⁹ **I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰**

On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, ¹¹ which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea." ¹² I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. ¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

1:10 in the Spirit. Because of the Spirit's role in his visions, John message was inspired and authoritative as those of the OT prophets. (TLSB)

1:12 golden lampstands. † The seven churches. Cf. symbolism in Mt 5:14–16. (CSB)

1:13 robe ... to his feet. The high priest wore a full-length robe (Ex 28:4; 29:5). Reference to Christ as high priest is supported by the reference to the golden sash around his chest. (CSB)

1:14 white like wool. † Cf. Da 7:9; Isa 1:18. The hoary head suggests wisdom and dignity (Lev 19:32; Pr 16:31). Whiteness is symbolic also of purity, holiness and righteousness. (CSB)

1:14 eyes ... like blazing fire. † Penetrating insight. In the OT God's eyes suggest his knowledge or his concern for his people (see Da 7:9; 10:6). (CSB)

1:15 feet were like bronze glowing. Feet of brass represent a strength that conquers all enemies. – This is as if they burned in a furnace, that is, like shining brightly, like metal under intense heat. God is not an idol, with feet of clay (Daniel 2:31-45). He shall stand forever and tread all his enemies underfoot, they shall be burned by the fire of his wrath and consumed by his anger and hot displeasure. (Poellot – p. 20)

1:15 voice was like the sound of rushing waters. Like waters, surging, restless, rising and falling, overwhelming, and irresistible in persistence and power. (Poellot – p. 20)

1:15 sharp double-edged sword. † Like a long Thracian sword. The sword symbolizes divine judgment, authority and God's word. (CSB)

GOSPEL – John 20:19-31

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

20:19 Peace be with you! The normal Hebrew greeting (cf. Da 10:19). Because of their behavior the previous Friday, they may have expected rebuke and censure; but Jesus calmed their fears. (CSB)

20:21 *I am sending you.* Christ sends forth His disciples in equality, without any distinction... He says, 'As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.' He says that He sends them individually in the same way He Himself was sent (John 12:44-50). Hus, "Jesus sends them to bear testimony to the truth, to preach the word of salvation, and, by life and teaching, to show the way of blessedness to the people. (TLSB)

20:22 *Receive the Holy Spirit.* Thus anticipating what happened 50 days later on the day of Pentecost (Ac 2). The disciples needed God's help to carry out the commission they had just been given. (CSB)

²⁴Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." ²⁶A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." ²⁸Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." ³⁰Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

20:26-27 What patient, seeking love of the Savior! He condescends to Thomas' requirement for both visual and physical "proof" of his resurrection, adding the plea, "Stop doubting and believe." Was it really necessary for Thomas to physically touch Jesus before he would believe? Most likely, the sight of the living Jesus was enough. Here is one more example of Jesus conquering unbelief. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 2)

20:31 *that by believing you may have life.* Another expression of purpose—to bring about faith that leads to life. (CSB)

John not only states the purpose of his Book, but summarizes succinctly its content. (TLSB)