

So here we are now in the midst of the Easter season. After Jesus died and was risen from the dead and spent time with His disciples, what happened next is He went to heaven. In fact, His whole body went to heaven in what we call His ascension into heaven. To ascend is to rise up. So Jesus' whole body rose up into heaven, right in front of his disciples. *Imagine.* You're standing there and you're talking to someone. Then all of a sudden that person starts to rise up into the sky right there in front of you, like a helium balloon. Pretty cool, huh? And not too long after that, the Holy Spirit came down on all the people in that dark, locked, upstairs room. Mrs. Quinlin will tell you all about that in another 5 weeks on Pentecost Sunday.

These early days of the Church, as we discussed last week, are recorded in the bible in a book called the Acts of the Apostles, which was written by the same person who wrote the gospel of St. Luke. We also discussed last week that during the Easter season, instead of an Old Testament reading, we read from the Acts of the Apostles to learn what it was like after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. The Acts of the Apostles *begin* with Jesus' ascension into heaven in Chapter 1 and Pentecost in Chapter 2, so everything else in the Acts of the Apostles takes place after Jesus ascended into heaven and the apostles had already received the Holy Spirit.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles (**Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41**)

The high priest said to the apostles, "We told you plainly not to teach in the name of Jesus. But look what you have done! You have been teaching all over Jerusalem, and you are trying to blame us for His death." Peter and the apostles replied, "We obey God instead of people. You killed Jesus by nailing Him to a cross. But the God our ancestors worshiped raised Him to life and made Him our Leader and Savior. Then God gave Him a place at His right side, so that the people of Israel would turn back to Him and be forgiven. We are here to tell you about all this, and so is the

Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to everyone who obeys God." The high priests warned them not to speak in the name of Jesus. Then they let them go. The apostles left the council and were happy, because God had considered them worthy to suffer for the sake of Jesus. And all day long they did not stop teaching about the Messiah. The Word of the Lord.

So let's go back to when the apostles were alive and *imagine* what it was like to live through what they were experiencing. Jesus, their leader and teacher had died, then, He rose from the dead, and then He spent time appearing to His disciples for a few weeks before He ascended into heaven. While Jesus was on this earth both before and after he was crucified, he instructed His disciples to spread His good news to all people. Ah, but the high priest and scribes, as it says so in the first sentence of today's reading, said "We told you plainly not to teach in the name of Jesus." So Jesus said teach and the priest and scribes said don't teach, and who did the apostles listen to? Of course, they listened to Jesus. What did Peter say? "We obey God instead of people." What happened next was they got into trouble and were told again to stop teaching about Jesus. In fact, this liturgy reading is actually shortened. The part of the passage which was cut out to shorten the reading was that the apostles were actually whipped. But when they were released from their beating, they were happy. Happy? Okay, this doesn't happen very often nowadays, but when I was your age, if you misbehaved, you could get a spanking. After you were spanked what do you think, would you be happy or sad? Well, you would probably be sad; you certainly would be sore. But the disciples were happy. What's with this? Well, maybe they remembered what Jesus had told them during the Sermon on the Mount in the gospel a few weeks ago. "God will bless you when others hate you and insult you and persecute you because you are a follower of the Son of Man." So they were happy because they had had a chance to suffer for the sake of Jesus, for the sake of the Son of Man. And they kept teaching about the Messiah, Jesus, because as Peter said, "We obey God, not people."

Responsorial Psalm (**Psalm 30:1-2, 4, 10-11, 12**)

I will praise You, Lord, for You have rescued me.

I will praise You, Lord, for You have rescued me.

I will praise You, Lord! You saved me from the grave. I prayed to You, Lord God, and You healed me. Your faithful people, Lord, will praise You with songs and honor Your holy name.

I will praise You, Lord, for You have rescued me.

Have pity, Lord! Help! You have turned my sorrow into joyful dancing. I will never stop singing your praises, my Lord and my God.

I will praise You, Lord, for You have rescued me.

So the disciples were whipped for teaching about Jesus and were happy about it. When they are released, how might they have demonstrated their happiness? Let's go back in time again and *imagine* the disciples walking through the streets of Jerusalem, happy because they had a chance to suffer for Jesus. When people are happy, sometimes they sing a song. *Imagine* the apostles singing, "I will praise You, Lord, for You have rescued me...You have turned my sorrow into joyful dancing. I will never stop singing your praises."

Gospel Acclamation (Notice, now that Lent is over, "alleluia" is back.)

Alleluia, Alleluia. *Alleluia, Alleluia.*

Lord Jesus, make Your word plain to us; make our hearts burn with love when You speak.

Alleluia, Alleluia.

A reading from the holy gospel according to St. John (**John 21:1-14**).

Jesus later appeared to His disciples along the shore of Lake Tiberias. Simon Peter, Thomas the Twin, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, and the two sons of Zebedee were there, together with two other disciples. Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing." The others said, "We'll go with you." They went out in their boat. But they didn't catch a thing the entire night. Early the next morning Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize who He was. Jesus shouted, "Friends, have you caught anything?". "No!" they answered. So He told them, "Let your net down on the right side of the boat, and you will catch some fish." They did what He said, and the net was so full of fish that they could not drag it up into the boat. Jesus' favorite disciple told Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, (he put on the clothes he had taken off while he was working. Then) he jumped into the water. The boat was only about a hundred yards from the shore. The other disciples stayed in the boat and dragged in the net full of fish. When the disciples got out of the boat, they saw some bread and a charcoal fire. Jesus told His disciples, "Bring some of the fish you just caught." Simon Peter got back into the boat and dragged the net to shore. In it were 153 large fish, but still the net did not rip. Jesus said, "Come and eat!" (But none of the disciples dared asked who He was. They knew He was the Lord.) Jesus took the bread in His hands and gave it to some of His disciples. He did the same with the fish. This was the third time that Jesus appeared to His disciples after He was raised from the dead. The gospel of the Lord.

Let's go back in time again to when the apostles were alive and *imagine* what they were experiencing. Again, Jesus had died. Then on the third day, again, He rose from the dead. As we know from last week's gospel, the disciples were in that dark, upstairs, locked room again. And Jesus appeared but Thomas the twin was missing. When the apostles told Thomas what had happened, Thomas said, "I don't

believe it.” But the next time Jesus visited the disciples, Thomas was there. And *then* Thomas became a believer.

So last week we had the first two times with and without Thomas, then this is the third time Jesus appeared to His disciples after He arose from the dead. The disciples were about 100 yards off shore, the length of a football field. *Imagine*. That’s close enough to be heard by someone yelling to you (if it’s not too noisy), and far enough away not to recognize who is doing the yelling. After the disciples told Jesus that they hadn’t caught any fish, Jesus told them to cast their net off the right side of the boat. And, of course, they caught a whole bunch of fish, and a light went off in their heads. *Déjà vu*. Didn’t this happen about three years ago when Jesus first met them. At *that* time after the not-yet-apostles caught all those fish and came ashore, Jesus told them to follow Him, and He would have them fishing for people instead of fish. So this time Peter figured it out. He was so excited to see the Lord that he jumped out of the boat and swam into shore and left the rest of his friends to bring the boat in after him when they all realized it was Jesus guiding them to the fish. And then Jesus fed them with some of the fish they had caught.

So what do we have here? We have the disciples who are men of action who listen to Jesus. They went out and taught in the name of Jesus because they were told to do so by Jesus, even though the priests and scribes told them not to. Then they got into trouble and were punished, but they were happy because they were doing what Jesus had told them to do. In the gospel they also followed what Jesus told them to do and cast their nets off the right side of the boat, even after spending the entire night not catching any fish. When they finally caught fish, they realized that it was Jesus on the shore directing them. And once again they were happy. So they followed Jesus’ directions, and it made them happy. It didn’t, and doesn’t, matter what other people think. “God will bless you when you follow Jesus.” So many lessons today. Let’s boil it down to this: love Jesus, follow Jesus, and God will make you happy.

And that, girls and boys, is the main lesson in today's readings. Speak to your parents about it.

Third Sunday of Easter, 2022, Joseph Calderone