

HOMILIES FOR MARCH, 1972

March 5, 1972 — **THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT**

SPIRITUAL WATERS FOR THE JOURNEY TO THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM

READINGS: First: Exodus 17: 3-7
Second: Romans 5: 1-2 5-8
Third: John 4:5-42

KEY IDEA: Natural water is necessary for the physical body's nourishment and strength. In today's liturgy Holy Mother Church imparts to us the idea that we need graces or spiritual waters so that we may be spiritually healthy and strong as we travel along the road to our heavenly destination.

The First Reading tells us that when the Israelites become thirsty as they journey to the Promised Land Yahweh instructs Moses to produce water from a rock for the thirsty people.

The Second Reading teaches us that the justified man, i.e. the man who lives always in the state of grace, enjoys peace with God, the hope of glory, God's love for him, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the imputation of Christ's merits.

The **Third Reading** makes us realize how Christ, in His conversation with the Samaritan woman, reveals that He is the source of living water, i.e. water that spiritually vivifies and strengthens a Christian for his eternal life.

HOMILY:

The Christian is a traveller bound for his heavenly home. The Christian is a pilgrim here on earth on his way to the heavenly shrine in the next life. The Christian is on his way to "worship the Father" in the heavenly Jerusalem. However, Our Lord Jesus Christ points out in today's Gospel that the worship of the Father already takes place during the Christian's journey to the heavenly mountain, or to the heavenly Jerusalem. Christ remarks: "But the hour will come — in fact it is here already — when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth".

Through Our Lord Jesus Christ God promised to bring all men to Heaven where they will enjoy eternal life and happiness with Him. In Christ men are assured of eternal salvation in the next life. Furthermore, God sees to it that men should have a foretaste of the eternal life and salvation while they still live here on earth. In Christ Who became man and Who suffered and died for the redemption of mankind men now partake of the eternal life even here on earth. Christ proclaims this truth when He says in today's Gospel: "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work. Have you not got a saying: Four months and then the harvest? Well, I tell you: Look around you, look at the fields; already they are white ready for harvest! Already the reaper is being paid his wages, already he is bringing in the grain for eternal life, and thus sower and reaper rejoice together".

The Christian is consoled by the fact that as he awaits the attainment of the heavenly reward and of eternal salvation promised to him by God he already partakes now of the heavenly reward and of eternal salvation here on earth, though, of course, in a limited measure. The Christian feels that he is spiritually nourished and strengthened in preparing himself here on earth for his heavenly destination. In his daily Christian living the Christian is vivified by the graces which he has acquired by virtue of his Baptism. These graces are like spiritual

waters flowing into the Christian spiritual life and giving him vigor and strength. The Christian receives these graces by virtue of Christ's salvific redemption for mankind and by virtue of the Christian's Baptism by which he is numbered among God's children.

The Christian must always take care not to lose these graces that give him spiritual nourishment and strength in his spiritual life against all spiritual enemies and gives him a foretaste of his future eternal life. Like the Israelites who always asked for water whenever they got thirsty during their long wanderings along the desert on their journey to the Promised Land, the Christian must also ask God to continue giving him graces and to give him back those graces which he may unfortunately lose from time to time. God wills the necessity of grace in the life of a Christian and He will, therefore, always be willing and ready to give graces whenever the Christian asks Him with a lively faith and confidence. A man who is always full of graces enjoys peace with God, the hope of glory, God's love for him, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the imputation of Christ's merits as St. Paul tells the Romans in his epistle to them. In short, "anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life". As Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us in today's Gospel.

March 12, 1972 — FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

READINGS: First: I Samuel 16:1 6-7 10-13
 Second: Ephesians 5:8-14
 Third: John 9:1-41

KEY IDEA: Today's liturgy speaks of Christ as the Light of the world who spiritually illumines the life of men. Our life as Christians should always be illumined by the Light of

Christ. We should lead a truly Christian life that is free from any influence of spiritual darkness.

The **First Reading** narrates to us how Yahweh is pleased with David and chooses him as King because he is the man according to Yahweh's heart.

The **Second Reading** tells us about the exhortations of St. Paul to the Ephesians to live according to God's will and to abandon the works of darkness, because they now possess the Light of Christ.

The **Third Reading** makes us realize how Our Lord Jesus Christ declares that He is the Light of the world and how He proves His declaration by giving both physical and spiritual illumination to the man born blind.

HOMILY:

The blind man's world is a world of darkness. All around him is darkness because he cannot see light. Somewhere in our world at this moment a blind man is struggling hard as he gropes for his way along the dark roads of his own little world of darkness. Poor blind man — if only you can recover your sight and behold the beauty of this world. We do not perhaps realize the world of darkness of the poor blind man because we have been endowed with the physical power of seeing since our birth. We may not fully grasp what the poor blind man's world is until we ourselves are deprived of our power of sight.

However, there is another world of darkness that can envelop us especially in our status as Christians. We may have the physical power of sight, yet we can become blind because we do not see Christ at all in our daily life. We can become blind because we do not fully grasp the message of Christ as we live from day to day. We can become blind because we walk through the roads of Life without the light of Christ guiding our way. We can become blind because we reject the light of Christ manifested in Christian moral principles and laws. We can become blind because we deliberately do not pay attention to Christ's doctrines being propagated by the Church which He had commissioned to spread His Good News. We can become blind because we do not see Christ inviting us to follow Him in His life of suffering and sacrifice.

Spiritual or moral blindness is a greater evil than physical blindness. Spiritual or moral blindness is a stumbling block to our journey to our real home in Heaven. It can lead us to deep spiritual pitfalls from which we can hardly pull ourselves out. It is of common observation that in our present society there is the growing tendency of men to be blind deliberately to the principles set down by Christ, especially to the moral principles of justice and charity. We are aware of the immorality of usury; yet some of us stubbornly persist in exacting an extremely high interest from a poor fellow-man who borrows money from us. We know fully well Christ's commandment of love for our neighbor; yet, some of us perpetrate robberies, holdups, murders, violence, etc.

In his Epistle to the Ephesians St. Paul exhorts us to "try to discover what the Lord wants of you, having nothing to do with the futile works of darkness but exposing them by contrast". During this Lenten season our main concern should be to recover our spiritual or moral sight which we may have totally or partially lost, and to emerge from the world of moral darkness into a world illumined by Christ's light. If we strive to live according to the principles set down by Christ, we shall deserve to be chosen also by God to share in the everlasting happiness and glory of the next life, just as David was chosen King by Yahweh. Our hope in emerging from the world of spiritual blindness and moral darkness and embracing the world illumined by the Light of Christ is in Christ Himself Who in today's Gospel gives both physical and spiritual illumination to the man born blind. St. Paul assures us: "Wake up from your sleep, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you". If we always walk now along the Road illumined by the Light of Christ, we shall deserve to live forever in the world which is eternally illumined by Christ — H E A V E N.

March 19, 1972 — FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

SPIRITUAL CONQUEST AND VICTORY

READINGS: First: Ezekiel 37: 12-14
Second: Romans 8:8-11
Third: John 11:1-45

KEY IDEA: Today's liturgy prepares us for the great Feast of the Resurrection which will be celebrated two weeks from now. During the whole period of Lent our thoughts should have been focused on the Resurrection for which this Lenten season is a preparation. During this Lenten season we look forward to the Feast of the Resurrection and prepare ourselves for it by leading exemplary and holy life so that in the end we may merit our final resurrection with Christ in the next life.

The **First Reading** tells us how Yahweh, through the prophet Ezekiel, assures the Israelites of their future deliverance from their captivity and of their future glorious re-establishment and revival as one kingdom.

The **Second Reading** shows us how St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans assures us of the future resurrection of our bodies as long as we always have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us in the present life.

The **Third Reading** narrates how Our Lord Jesus Christ raised to life Lazarus who has been dead for four days already.

HOMILY: Two weeks from now we shall be celebrating the Feast of the Resurrection of Christ. Two weeks from now the atmosphere of liturgical celebrations will assume a glorious and joyful tone because Christ will have risen from the dead. During this period of Lent Holy Mother Church has been hammering on us the ideas and practices of repentance and penance. It is but significant that today Holy Mother Church reminds us of the coming Feast of the Resurrection. Holy Mother Church wishes us to realize that our acts of repentance and penitential practices during this Lenten season will have fuller meaning if they only have direct connection with the Feast of the Resurrection. In other words, we must repent and do penance in the light of the Resurrection of Christ. We must repent and do penance as we look forward to our future resurrection merited for us by Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

In our present earthly life we are hold captive by Satan and sin. We are prisoners of our own human weaknesses. We are slaves of our own inclinations to sins

of the flesh. In our own capacity as human beings we cannot do anything to deliver ourselves from our captivity by Satan, sin, and our human weaknesses. It is only because of God's saving grace merited for us by Christ through His Passion, Death, and Resurrection, that we overcome Satan, sin, and our human weaknesses. Just as Yahweh, through His prophet Ezekiel, assured the Israelites of their future deliverance from their captivity, so also does Christ continuously assures us of our deliverance from the captivity of Satan, sin, and our human weaknesses, and of our subsequent resurrection with Him in glory in the next life. Christ assures us of our deliverance from the captivity of Satan, sin, and our human weaknesses as long as we do our part — in being always faithful to Him and in cooperating with Him in our struggle against Satan, sin, and our human weaknesses.

In our struggle for deliverance from Satan, sin, and our human weaknesses we shall always be helped by the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us. We should not therefore, drive the Holy Spirit from us. It is the Holy Spirit who will help us become victorious over Satan, sin, and our human weaknesses. The Holy Spirit who dwells in us is the pledge of our future resurrection in glory for Christ. The Holy Spirit who dwells in us and by whom our bodies are sanctified is the pledge of our future participation in the glorious Resurrection of Christ. God will surely glorify our bodies because these have been temples of the Holy Spirit during our present earthly life. This is the principal thought of the part of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Roman which was read in today's Liturgy of the Word. We have the pledge of our future resurrection in glory with Christ from the lips of Christ Himself as He raised Lazarus from the dead: "I am the resurrection. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die". As we prepare ourselves now during this Lenten season for the Feast of the Resurrection, let us not forget that this preparation should last throughout our whole life so that in the end we shall really merit participation in Christ's glorious resurrection.

March 26, 1972 —

PALM SUNDAY

SPIRITUAL CROSSES OF EARTHLY LIFE

READINGS: First: Isaiah 50:4-7
 Second: Philippians 2:6-11
 Third: Matthew 26:14-27:66

KEY IDEA: Today's liturgy recalls to us the Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In today's liturgy Holy Mother Church wishes us to grasp the full significance of Christ's Passion and Death and to be able to apply these sorrowful events of Christ's if in our own Christian life that is commonly marked by pain, sickness, and sufferings. As we recall today Christ's Passion and Death in preparation for the coming days of Holy Week, let us remember that Christ's Sufferings and Death have significance only because He will rise from the dead on the third day. Likewise, our present endurance of pain, sickness, and sufferings will have their value only if they are directed to our future resurrection in glory with Christ.

The **First Reading** describes to us the qualities of the Suffering Servant: His obedience, constancy, and confidence in Yahweh.

The **Second Reading** shows St. Paul writing to the Philip-pines about the practice of humility after the example of Christ who, although He was divine, nevertheless deigned to assume human nature so that He could suffer for us.

The **Third Reading** narrates to us the principal events of Christ's Passion and Death.

HOMILY: Each one of us has his own experience of suffering everyday. We long for ease and comfort; yes, we find ourselves living comfortably but to our dismay we discover that this experience of comfort becomes only transitory. Most of the time we have to struggle through a life of suffering and other events or happiness repulsive to our human nature. Our whole life from the crib to the grave is continuously filled with sufferings.

Indeed, suffering in all its forms is a reality of our life here on earth; oftentimes, it becomes a bitter reality. There is no use trying to get away from suffering as long as we live here on earth. Whenever we have passed through one form of suffering, we again encounter another form of suffering. There is no use playing hide-and-seek with suffering in this earthly life. What should concern us is our attitude toward suffering! How do we take our suffering? Many of us would calmly and silently accept suffering as the common lot of all men. In our moments of suffering some of us would immediately have recourse to our fellowmen and ask for their help and guidance and advice. Others would rebel against God; they would deny His existence: How could there be God when there is so much suffering around us? Still others would become desperate and tired of a life of continuous suffering; they would use a gun, or a knife, or a bottle of poison to end their life of suffering.

The Christian's real attitude toward suffering is to take suffering as an opportunity to apply Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection in his daily life. It is in this application that Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection become relevant in a Christian's daily life. It is in this application that a Christian can make the Suffering and Crucified Christ more relevant in his daily life. It is wrongly interpreted by some Christians that the figure of the Suffering and Crucified Christ is a sign of pessimistic Christianity. On the contrary, the figure of the Suffering and Crucified Christ is a sign of optimistic Christianity because Christ's Passion and Death led to His glorious Resurrection from the dead and assured us of a new life which we now begin to experience in this earthly life and which we will perfectly enjoy in the next life. Through our sufferings in our daily life we should re-enact Christ's Passion and Death. We must manifest in ourselves Christ's attitude toward suffering — a joyful attitude inasmuch as He foresaw His glorious Resurrection. As we begin the Holy Week today with Palm Sunday, let us remember that Holy Week becomes meaningful only when there is an Easter Sunday — the Day of the Resurrection of Christ. Our whole life from the crib to the grave is one long Holy Week but it becomes meaningful because we have the assurance of an everlasting life

of glory and happiness merited for us by Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Our whole life from the crib to the grave is one long Holy Week of suffering that would reach its glorious climax in the next life. This is the Christian's real attitude towards suffering. Let it be yours, too.

● **Rev. Javier Montemayor**
Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan

MISSION OF PRIESTS

"Priests are sent to all men and their mission must begin with the preaching of God's Word. Priests have as their duty the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ to all . . . for through the saving Word the spark of Faith is struck in the hearts of unbelievers and fed in the hearts of the faithful (PO 4). The goal of evangelization is that all who are made sons of God by Faith and Baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in her sacrifice and to eat the Lord's suffer (SC 10). The ministry of the Word, if rightly understood, leads to the sacraments and to the christian life, as it is practised in the visible community of the Church and in the world.

The sacraments are celebrated in conjunction with the proclamation of the Word of God and thus develop Faith by strengthening it with grace. They cannot be considered of slight importance, since through them the word is brought to fuller effect, namely communion in the mystery of Christ.

Let priests then perform their ministry in such a way that the faithful will have recourse with great eagerness to the sacraments which were instituted to nourish the Christian life (SC 59)."

Synodal Document on the
Ministerial Priesthood

HOMILIES FOR APRIL, 1972

April 2, 1972 — SOLEMNITY OF EASTER: THE LORD'S
RESURRECTION

LET US BE GLAD AND REJOICE

READINGS: First: Acts 10:34, 37-43
Second: Colossians 3:1-4
Third: John 20:1-9

KEY IDEA: We have every reason to be filled with joys today because Christ's Resurrection has brought about a new life for all of us. We share this new life by virtue of our Baptism and with this new life we have a foretaste of the heavenly life of everlasting glory and happiness.

The **First Reading** tells us how Peter is one of the few chosen ones to whom Christ appears after His Resurrection. In the **Second Reading** St. Paul counsels us to be more concerned with heavenly realities inasmuch as we possess the new life merited for us by Christ's Resurrection.

The **Third Reading** narrates to us how the first witnesses of Christ's Resurrection began to understand the reality of the Resurrection.

HOMILY: Our response to the Word of God in the first Scripture reading of today's Mass is a wonderful expression of what is in the hearts of every Christian today, on the feast of our Lord's Resurrection — "This is the day which the Lord has made. Let us be glad and rejoice therein." Today is the day of days, the first day of God's new creation, the day on which Christ conquered death.

This is the day of Christ's triumph. We rejoice and are glad not only for the sake of Christ but also for our own

sake. We are one with Christ. We have won with Christ. We share in His triumph because His victory is already ours. We too have already begun to share in His glorious resurrection. When we were baptized, we had been buried in the waters of Baptism and had risen with the new life of divine grace which we received from the Risen and Glorified Christ in baptism. We do not have to wait until we have died and gone to heaven to live the new life of grace which the Risen Lord has won for us. We live that life here and now. We share in the life of the Blessed Trinity; we are adopted sons of God. Already, we are living, in embryo, the life of heaven.

Because we now share in Christ's risen life we should have joy in our hearts all the time. Even in the midst of so many hardships, sufferings and dissapointment which continuously beset us, we should have deep in our hearts an Easter joy that can never be disturbed. Our life, inspite of those many hardships which we encounter in our daily lives, is a life of freedom and happiness. To some of us these are only words. The Christian life to them seems to be a life of burdensome duties and obligations, a life of frustrating "don'ts", a life full of laws and commandments to be kept almost with clenched teeth. People who view the Christian life this way, miss its meaning and fail to find the peace and joy which Christ meant us to have even in this world. These people miss the true meaning of Christian life because they do not see that life for what it is — a life of love. One who really loves God and knows that God loves him and approves of him experiences this joy even amidst the sufferings of this world. St. Paul is telling us in today's epistle how to keep the Easter joy in our hearts all the time. We must purge out the old leaven. We must free ourselves from dependance on money and pleasure. He challenges our sinfulness, our selfishness and disobedience, intolerable in the warmth of Christ's charity.

We identify ourselves at the Offertory with the unleavened bread. At this time especially we are reminded by St. Paul that we must celebrate "not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." This sacrifice of our selfishness becomes pleasing to the Father in the person of His obedient, self-surrendered and risen Son.

We share now in the Eucharistic meal with the family of Christians. The one bread unites us to the risen Christ, and to one another in Him. Let us celebrate this Mass with special fervor which is really from within our hearts. Answering God's Word today means for us responding to the Father with Christ. Our joy stems from the fact that we can respond once more to the Father. By His resurrection Christ makes it possible for us to become new people. United to Him therefore, we are nourished in this Mass and strengthened to live as becomes our glorious newness.

April 9, 1972 — SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

"MY LORD AND MY GOD"

READINGS: First: Acts 2:42-47
 Second: I Peter 1:3-9
 Third: John 20:19-31

KEY IDEA: We do not physically see Christ risen in glory but we believe that we now share in His divine life and will soon join Him in His heavenly glory. We really need faith to come into contact with the Risen Christ.

The **First Reading** tells us how the early Christian community are faithful to the teaching of the apostles.

In the **Second Reading** we are advised to have faith in Christ's Resurrection which assures us of our heavenly life.

In the **Third Reading** Thomas doubts Christ's Resurrection but is corrected by Christ Who tells him: "You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe".

HOMILY: You have heard in the gospel today about the doubting Thomas. Christ, a few days after His resurrection from the dead, appeared to His apostles but Thomas was not present. When the apostles had told Thomas that Jesus was alive,

Thomas doubted. He laid down conditions, his conditions, under which he would believe.

Our Lord Jesus has realized that man of His followers even down to our present days would face the same problem Thomas faced. As He appeared in person to dispel the doubts of Thomas, He also comes to us through the power of the Spirit and in the Mass and other sacraments to dispel our doubts. He is still present among us as the Lord. Only our encounter with Him is not a physical meeting but an encounter in faith. This Holy Sacrifice of the Mass gives us an opportunity to cry out with Thomas "My Lord and my God."

Faith my dear friends, is our victory over death and sin. By our faith we accept that Christ is God. Faith is the very means by which we come in contact with Him. Faith makes Christ present among us. Just as Thomas reached out with his hands and touched the risen Christ, so too we by faith reach out the same living Christ. Thomas saw Christ with his bodily eyes. We who believe that Christ is the Son of God see Him with the eyes of faith.

In the first section of the Gospel read today, St. John tells us how Christ breathed upon the apostles and gave them the Holy Spirit. When we were baptized, we were also given by Christ His spirit, the Holy Spirit, in order to remake us, to give us new life. Through this spirit we share in the victory of Christ over sin, suffering and death. From the Spirit we receive the power to believe, to see and to accept Christ.

As we receive Him in Holy Communion we should embrace Him as Thomas did and cry out "My Lord and my God." In this our meeting with Him He wills to give us His peace and His Spirit at once His Father's as well, so that we may carry on the Father's work: the freeing of the world from the powers of darkness that it may be filled with the Christ-life. Our faith, that filial surrender to the Father with Christ, leads us to this meeting and is nourished in it.

Upon reaching our homes, filled with the Spirit of our Risen Lord, let us strengthen and prove our faith to others by showing them examples of charity and other good

works. It is only by so doing that we shall have the joy and confidence that Thomas had when he placed his fingers in the wounds of Christ.

April 16, 1972 —

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

THE BREAKING OF BREAD

READINGS: First: Acts 2:14, 22-28
 Second: I Peter 1:17-21
 Third: Luke 24:13-35

KEY IDEA: Jesus is recognized by the two disciples through the breaking of bread. The message of the breaking of bread is love and unity which aptly characterizes a Christian who has been redeemed by the Risen Christ. In the **First Reading** Peter denounces those who killed and crucified Christ.

The **Second Reading** emphasizes to us the reality that man has been ransomed by Christ Who in His infinite Love voluntarily accepted to offer His life for sinful mankind. In the **Third Reading** Christ reveals Himself through the the breaking of bread — efficacious sign of love and unity.

HOMILY: In today's gospel you have heard that it was only at the breaking of the bread that the two disciples recognized our Risen Christ being with them. Immediately upon realization that it was the Master who was with them the disciples were filled with joy and gladness and could not be stopped from telling others that they have seen the Lord.

This breaking of the bread is also done during this Mass, in this great memorial instituted by Christ Himself. The Holy Mass is the privelege hour in which we "know" and "recognize" Him. Here our Lord is making an encounter with us. Let us therefore be filled with the spirit of gladness and thanksgiving. Our participation in this Eucharistic Celebration must beget love, unity and under-

standing among all of us. We are partaking of one and the same body. We are forming one family, the family of the sons of God. The one bread, though broken into many symbolizes our union and oneness in Christ.

Like the two disciples let us rejoice and spread around the message of unity and love which we have outwardly shown through our participation in the Holy Sacrifice. Let us help build a community where true brotherly love and unity exist. This is the task and mission entrusted to us by Christ.

Through the Holy Mass Christ is giving us the occasion to renew our fidelity to Him. He is calling us together to partake of the Sacred Meal and be imbued with His Spirit. When we offer the bread and wine, let us also offer God our own lives. If these lives are not holy and Christian, our gift is a mockery and God is not pleased with us. If we do not love all people and try hard to avoid sins, then we are not rededicating our lives to Christ. God has called us and has chosen us to be one, not only externally but much more in spirit and in truth.

May our unity and love symbolized by the breaking of the bread during this Mass be realized in our daily lives. We only hope and pray that we could bring Christ to others and may they always find and recognize Christ in us. We are all one in Christ. May we learn to express our unity in Him by loving one another for the sake of Christ.

April 23, 1972 — FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

READINGS: First: Acts 2:14a, 36-41
 Second: I Peter 2:20b-25
 Third: John 10:1-10

KEY IDEA: By His Passion, Death and Resurrection Christ has become for us the door to Heaven. Without Christ we cannot enter Heaven. In a similar way by our own good example and

holy Christian living we should become the door through which our fellowmen can come into contact with Christ, and, consequently merit to enter Heaven.

The **First Reading** tells us how the first converts to Christianity are admitted through Baptism into the Church — the gathering of the People of God.

The **Second Reading** let us know how Christ sets a good example of a life of holiness, love, humility, and patience.

In the **Third Reading** Christ Himself affirms that He is the door to Heaven and that no one can enter Heaven except through Him.

HOMILY: We have heard Christ Himself telling us in today's gospel that He is "the door of the sheepfold. He also said that if anyone enters by Him will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. He proclaimed to us the purpose of His coming: "I came that you may have life and have it abundantly."

You all know what a door is. Without the door we cannot enter into any house and enjoy the company of our friends. Without any door we cannot come into our house and be protected from bad weather. Without any door then we could not be sheltered under one house to enjoy our meals with our loved ones.

First of all, let us be convinced by this comparison that without Christ then we cannot do anything. He is the door of heaven. We must first believe in Him if we want to enter heaven. By coming to Him, as we have done this morning, then we can find the food needed for our spiritual nourishment — His own Body. We all need our Lord. We must be gathered into Him — the word "ecclesia" means the gathering together of all people of God in Christ; and secondly, by being concerned to make this gathering together possible.

He told us that he came down to give us life abundantly. In Holy Communion we eat the holy bread, the Word made flesh. In this our intimate encounter with Him, Christ, by his Spirit, gives us light to know and love God in this gift of His Word, and strength to witness in our words and deeds to the new way of life it gives us.

When we were baptized we were grafted to the very life of Christ Himself. We died in our sinful self and gain a new life — the life of Christ Himself. This is the tremendous act of God's love and mercy for us men. That inspite of our sinfulness brought about by the fall of our first parents, still Christ has opened for us the gate of heaven. He is our Way to the Father. He will be the one to lead us back into our heavenly home prepared for us by our Father. By feeding us with His own Body our Lord is already giving us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet prepared also for us in the kingdom of our Father.

After we have received the Body of Christ we should be one with St. Paul in saying that we are not the one who live but rather Christ in us. With this kind of life we should serve as a living witness to others of Christ's love for all men. By showing them good example and by our charitable works when we could lead those who are going astray to the Door, Christ Himself, so that they could also easily enter into our home in heaven.

April 30, 1972 —

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

CHRIST'S LEADERSHIP

READINGS: First: Acts 6:1-7
 Second: I Peter 2:4-9
 Third: John 14:1-12

KEY IDEA: In today's liturgy Christ assures us of His powerful and influential leadership from His place in Heaven. Even if He is physically absent from our midst, Christ wishes that His leadership should be felt among us. His leadership should effect our reunion with Him in His place in Heaven.

The **First Reading** tells us that in its early years the Church faces a problem of internal government: the distribution of work among responsible leaders.

In the **Second Reading** Christians are counselled to construct a spiritual temple on a strong foundation which is Christ Himself.

In the **Third Reading** Christ tells His disciples that He will go ahead of them and prepare a place for them in God's house in Heaven. He is going to lead the way for them.

HOMILY:

In our human way of thinking a leader is always someone who is physically present in a group and gives material and moral support to the members of the group in the pursuit of certain goals. The leader stands for the unity and coherence and strength of the group so that his strength or weakness means the unity or disintegration of the group. Christ is our leader; but His leadership is a unique one. He is not physically present among us but He wills and He claims to be our leader. And the goal for which He would like to lead us is our final reunion with Him and with the Father in Heaven. Through Christ's leadership over us now we gain a new relationship with Him and with the Father — a relationship which we shall continue enjoying in our reunion with them in heaven. Christ unites us to the Father because He leads us to Him. He tells us in today's Gospel that "No one can come to the Father except through me".

With this new relationship which we gain when we follow Christ our Leader, we do not become merely blind followers of Christ. We become one with Christ our Leader because we share in the life of grace that makes Him our Leader. We participate in the leadership of Christ. In today's Epistle we are told to: "set yourselves close to him (i.e. Christ) so that you too . . . may be living stones making a spiritual house". We have a goal to achieve: the construction of a spiritual temple or house where we shall be reunited with Christ and the Father in the next life. In this construction of a spiritual temple or house we need Christ as our foundation; we need Christ as our Leader. In this construction each one of us has a role to fulfill with and under Christ our Leader. But we should begin building this spiritual temple or house now — among ourselves and our fellowmen. Christ's lead-

ership should be made manifest to all men through us. This is how Christ could exercise his unique leadership over mankind: that although He may not be physically present among men, He would still be leading them. As far as possible, Christ would like to gather all men and bring them all to the place of reunion with Him and the Father in Heaven.

How eagerly do we follow Christ our Leader? How do we participate in His leadership? How do we make His leadership be felt among us and our fellowmen? Do we live the exemplary life of a Christian who has been redeemed by Christ and has received the right to participate in the divine life? Do we fully live up to our life as children of God and future inhabitants of heaven? Let the Risen Christ be our Leader in our journey to Heaven where we expect to be reunited with Him and the Father.

● **Rev. Josefino Ramirez**
Diocese of Imus

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR SUNDAY HOMILY

No one can prepare your homily but you. All homilies written by others are mere aids to you in the preparation of your own homily. How can you prepare your homily? On Monday go over the Readings of the coming Sunday. Make them the topic of your meditations from Monday to Saturday. If done conscientiously, these meditations will materialize into a beautiful Sunday homily.