

HOMILETICS

BIBLICAL NOTES AND HOMILIES FOR APRIL

By

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EVENING MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

(April 3, 1980)

First Reading: Exodus 12:1-8.11-14. The Paschal Lamb was both sacrifice (v. 17) and sacrificial meal. It eminently prefigures Christ, our true Paschal Lamb, who has been sacrificed (1 Cor. 5:7) and of whom we partake (Jn. 6:54). Innocent and without blemish, the lamb was immolated toward evening, its flesh eaten, its blood communicated to the dwelling places as a sign of salvation and well-being. All this is fulfilled in Christ. St. Justin also mentions that the paschal lamb was placed on two spits in the form of a cross before it was immolated.

The actions and gestures accompanying the passover meal as it was celebrated year after year were to remind God's People of their passing out of slavery to the freedom of the promised land. The word "passover" was given a popular root-meaning, taken from the Hebrews pesach (Aramaic pascha), meaning both to pass over and to pass through. Both meanings are applied by the sacred writer to the situation at hand: God passed over Israel, sparing their lives, and Israel passed through the sea to freedom.

Second Reading: First Corinthians 11:23-26. Together with 10:21 this is the earliest witness to the Eucharist (written about 56 A.D.). It contains clear statements about the nature of the Eucharist:

1) The Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of Christ. The words are crystal clear as is the inference from v. 29. In the original Greek it is simply stated: "This is my Body, which is for you", body meaning himself totally as manifested. His is a life for others, now a total sacrifice for man. In the second part, "this cup is the new covenant in my Blood", two figures of speech are employed: the container (cup) stands for what is contained in it, and the

effect (the covenant) is given instead of the cause (the Blood, that is, the sacrificial death), which brings about the permanent covenant between God and man.

2) The Eucharist is a true sacrifice: The Body and Blood are mentioned separately, the pouring out being the sign of sacrifice. The same reference to sacrifice is found in v. 12. Then there is an inescapable allusion to the sacrifice on Mt. Sinai, when the Old Covenant was sealed by the pouring out of the blood of animal sacrifices with the words: This is the blood of the covenant Ex. 24:8.

3) The Eucharistic sacrifice is one with that on Golgotha, for as often as it is celebrated, it proclaims the death of the Lord (v. 26) by re-enacting it, making it known and effective for all who participate.

4) The Apostles are empowered to perpetuate the very act which Christ performed: vv. 24,26. The power passes on to their successors, because it must be enacted "until he comes" (v. 26).

Reading of the Good News: John 13:1-15. Two trends of thought are presented in this passage:

1) The stupendous example of humble service, given by him "who was fully aware that he came from God" (v. 3), by an action usually performed by slaves, to summarize and climax an entire life of total service to others in this supreme symbol of service.

2) The emphasis on cleaning by means of Christ's salvific work, realized through his "self-emptying", as well as the need of accepting Christ's standpoint in this matter, in order to have any fellowship with him. The "washing" and "cleansing" conjure up the sacrament of initiation into Christ, which is baptism.

But the passage is also replaced with other considerations: 1) It is the first time that John mentions the real motive behind the passion and death is Christ's extreme love, an important factor in understanding the mystery of the Cross.

2) Behind the scenes invisible forces are at work to undo the work of Christ, a personal archenemy working through one of the closest companions of Jesus, who had turned traitor, Judas Iscariot.

3) Christ's command to live a similar life of service as given by him in the example of the washing of the feet.

HOMILY THE EUCHARIST

On this very evening, almost 2000 years ago. Jesus reclined at table with his chosen disciples. He had just given them the supreme example of loving service which was to characterize his disciples:

he had knelt down before them and washed their feet, the task of a slave for his master. But now it is the master who washes the feet of his servants. "The great ones in the world" he said, "lord it over their subjects, but he who wishes to be great among you must be the servant of all" (Lk. 22:25f).

To cap his example of love and service, he resumed his place at table, and taking bread into his sacred hands, he instituted the stupendous mystery of the Eucharist. "This is my Body", he said, "take and eat". And over the cup of wine: "This is the cup of my Blood, which is poured out for you". From that day till now, we have celebrated the Eucharist, wherein Jesus crystallized his entire life of sacrifice and loving service. In churches and chapels, in prisons and hovels, in open and in secret, Christ's ministers have celebrated the Eucharist as he told them: "Do this in remembrance of me."

The Eucharist is first of all, the great and unique sacrifice of the New Covenant, the memorial sacrifice of his passion and death, of his resurrection and ascension. Again it is Christ offered in sacrifice under the appearance of bread and wine as he was that first time in the upper room. He offers himself to the Father for the sins of men, but specially to thank the Father as a dutiful Son for his immense goodness toward men. But the Eucharist is not only a sacrifice, it is a sacrificial meal, instituted in the very midst of a meal, that last supper before he died. Truly it is Christ's love-feast, for he gives himself utterly out of love to all who will come to receive him. The family of God gathers around the table of the Lord. That is why it is celebrated with joy and festive song.

Moreover, the Eucharist is the sign of unity and love. Just as many grains go into the making of one loaf of bread, and many grapes into one drink, so we, though many, are one Christ (1 Cor. 10:17). It is a sign of unity between God and man for it is the renewal of the Covenant in Christ's Blood. Likewise it is the sign of unity between all those who are one in Christ. Therefore ought all men love one another for we eat and drink of the same sacred banquet, which ought to unite us all in a community of love.

Just as the paschal lamb was immolated and eaten by the People of God of old, so the Eucharist is the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ. He is the true Lamb, whose Blood redeems men and saves them from eternal death. His flesh is food indeed, and by him we are nourished for eternal life, for he who eats his flesh and drinks his blood will live forever. Today we renew ourselves in our awareness of Christ's immense love for us, in his instituting this unique testimony of his goodness. He remains

always with us as our sacrifice and our food, to enable us as God's children to grow into the full stature of Christ, until we see him face to face in the realms above, and partake of the divinity of which the Eucharist is a foretaste.

GOOD FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION
(April 4, 1980)

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOMILIES ON THE SEVEN LAST WORDS

1. **Father forgive them (Lk. 23:34).**
 - a. The Sufferings of the victim-lamb: See Is. 52:13 as far as 53:7.
 - b. Christ's loving forgiveness of his worst enemies. He finds an excuse: v. 14.
 - c. Our duty of forgiving those who wronged us: see Mt. 6:12; 18:35.
2. **This day you will be with me in paradise (Lk. 23:43).**
 - a. The fruit of the Lamb's sufferings (see Isaiah 53:10-12; 1 Pet. 2:21-24).
 - b. Christ's love for each and every sinner. See Gal. 2:20; Mt. 11:28).
 - c. Compunction and repentance in view of Christ's undying love in death.
3. **Woman, there is your son (Jn. 19:26).**
 - a. The last gift of Jesus before he died to all his faithful ones: his Mother. Mary's spiritual Motherhood over all the Church promulgated.
 - b. The spiritual birthpangs of the Mother to bring forth the children of God.
 - c. The faithful disciple (Jn. 19:27) looks to the Mother for guidance and help. His life is not his but Christ's living in him (Gal. 2:20a).
4. **My God, my God why have you forsaken me (Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34).**
 - a. His last agony: inner darkness; cursed and mocked by man; seemingly alone in death. (See Ps. 22:7-12; Is. 53:4).
 - b. In reality, the object of the Fathers's good pleasure: Hebr. 2:10; 2:18; 5:7-10; Phil. 2:8-11.
 - c. Jesus, solace of those in inner darkness, hope of the dying, Savior of men.

5. **I thirst:** Jn. 19:28.
 - a. The excruciating pain of those dying of thirst (See Ps. 22:15-16). 22:15-16).
 - b. The spiritual thirst of the Heart of Jesus for the hearts of all men whom he redeemed by such sufferings and even by his death: See Jn. 7:37-38.
 - c. The song of the redeemed: Ps. 23 and Rev. 5:9.12.
6. **Now it is finished** (Jn. 19:30)
 - a. The great work of redemption accomplished (See Jn. 17:4; Hebr. 1:1-4). Satan dethroned; heaven opened; God glorified forever.
 - b. Man's ingratitude: the indifference of the worldly-minded. The sin of unbelief.
 - c. Gratitude of those faithful to Christ, as shown in these days of the paschal triduum. Return to God. Love for Christ. Renewal in the Christ-life.
7. **Father, into your hands I commend my spirit** (Lk. 23:46)
 - a. The childlike obedience of Jesus all thru life to the very end (Jn. 4:34).
 - b. Submission to the Father's will, his last act on earth.
 - c. Our model when death comes to take us to the Father (See 1 Pet. 4:1-2.19).

EASTER SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S RESURRECTION

(April 6, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 10: 34a.37-43. A resumé of the chief content of the oral kerygma (which kept developing until it formed the material for the written gospels). God's plan of salvation for mankind is concentrated in Jesus of Nazareth, climaxing Israel's salvation history. Peter proclaims the Good News in its salient points:

- 1) The divine mission of Jesus, anointed by the Spirit.
- 2) His death on the cross.
- 3) His resurrection. The Apostles are witnesses to the Risen Lord.
- 4) His command to proclaim the Good News of salvation.
- 5) His glorious Coming as Judge of all.
- 6) Forgiveness of sin: the result of his salvific work.

Second Reading: Colossians 3:1-4. The Risen Christ is the source of new life for every Christian who also has risen spiritually (or in Spirit) to new life in Christ. Since Christ is enthroned at the

Father's right hand, let the Christian pursue the aims of Christ, and not merely material aims. Even though his work be in the things of earth, his aim must be to further the work of Christ, who, as head of the universe, builds through each of his members the world to come. In baptisms, the Christian had died to all that displeases God. His new life, lived in the midst of the world, is interior and hidden in Christ. Thus he can live the Christ-life to the full, by doing good to his fellowmen. When Christ comes in glory, the faithful Christian will openly share his glory.

Reading of the Good News: John 20:1-9. Though no one was present to witness the resurrection itself, all the Apostles bore witness to the fact that Jesus had risen, and was alive in their midst. They had never understood it when he prophesied about rising from the dead, so it is no wonder that only now even John came to believe it. Although the Apostles (except Thomas) were all given to see the Risen Christ in person that same day, yet already now the very fact that the tomb was empty with the linens retaining the same position of the body laid in the tomb (and not thrown aside) convinced John of what had happened. The recent controversy whether the dead body of Jesus might still be found (since his glorified body is a totally transformed one) is pointless, because the enemies could so easily have removed the stone and made a laughing stock of the Apostles' testimony. The ridiculous story of the Apostles' stealing the body needs no refutation, as if Pilate would have let it go at that. The entire tenor of the Gospel narrative argues against it. Only the Risen Christ, the identical Christ they knew for sure had died, could have made the Apostles the staunch witnesses they proved to be, and only then when he first gave them his Spirit. The fact of the resurrection, preached far and wide by the Apostles made such an impression on contemporaries, that it brought in conversions by the thousands. Christ has died, but Christ is risen, and lives in our midst!

HOMILY

AFTER DEATH, LIFE, TRUE AND UNENDING

(Note: pointers for other homilies are given in the biblical notes above).

They thought he was an imposter when he died, but he rose triumphant from the grave and proved to all Israel that he was her Messiah-King, the One sent by the Father for the salvation of all mankind, Jesus of Nazareth, crucified three days previous. He died the death of a criminal, the Roman crucifixion, but he

rose glorious and immortal, he the Holy One of Israel, the innocent Lamb of God, having accomplished the mission given him by the Father. He seemed to have been taken away by an untimely death in the height of manhood, but he entered upon a life of glory that never ends, and he lives on in the believing community, the Church, which is his Body. Jesus of Nazareth born of the Virgin Mary, has conquered death, and death has no longer any hold on him. He has entered into life, that never ends, for he himself is the Life that was with the Father and has been manifested to man (1 Jn. 1:2), the Life which all the powers of darkness could not succeed in overcoming (Jn. 1:5).

Now the heart of man can take courage, for Life itself has conquered death, and all who die in Christ have this same hope, that though they die, they will rise again in the glory of the Risen Christ. They will enter upon a new life, free from sorrow and pain, for man's miseries will be absorbed by the sufferings of Christ, and will enable him to merit a glorious reward at the throne of the Most High. The poor who had little in this world, yet trusted in God, will share the riches of the Godhead. The downtrodden who never could win out over those who lorded it over them will themselves be lords of the world to come, and rule with Christ forever. The handicapped who never succeeded in making a success of life will enjoy the lasting success of having remained faithful to God with a clean conscience. All those who strove to do God's will in their own calling and their individual capacities, will glory in the God who loves them with infinite love and has prepared a dwelling place for them that is incorruptible and everlasting.

Easter joy rings with Alleluja: Praise the Lord! All praise is due to him who gallantly went the way of the Cross and is now gloriously reigning at the throne of the Most High. Alleluja: Praise the Lord! God has seen fit to give us his own Son to be our Savior and Brother, who bore all our sufferings and miseries, turning them into capital for acquiring the riches of God. Alleluja: Praise the Lord! Jesus the Savior has tasted life on earth, has tasted our sufferings even unto death, now he is the Hope of every human heart. He reigns forever, and we shall reign with him. Buoyed up with new Easter joy, our hearts are ready to take up our daily tasks again, for soon the everlasting Easter shall dawn, and on our lips will be the eternal Alleluja; Praise the Lord.

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (April 13, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 5:12-16. A glimpse into the early Christian community. The Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit was accom-

panied by many "signs" and "wonders". All were made to see that the community headed by the Apostles was the work of God and not merely the work of man. They met as a body in one of the porches of the Temple-grounds toward the East. Only those who professed their belief in Jesus could belong to their group. Peter's prominence stands out as he continues the role of Christ the Good Shepherd.

Second Reading: Revelation 1:9-11, 12-13, 17-19. The author makes it clear that sharing Christ's kingly reign on earth entails sufferings, in bearing witness to Christ and the gospel-message. Darkness will always hate the Light and try to snuff it out (Jn. 1:4). Patient endurance wins the crown.

The ensuing brilliant vision unveils Christ gloriously reigning in the midst of the Church, symbolized by the lampstands (v. 20), seven being the symbolic number of fulness. Christ is equally present to all. His garment reaching to the ankles marks him as high priest (Ex. 28; 4; 29:5). "Girt at the loins" is a symbol of continence and sinlessness (see 1 Pet. 1:13). Gold stands for royalty. The vision is overpowering but Christ assures him that there is nothing to fear. All things are in his hands. He has overcome all hostile powers, even those of the underworld. Now he is the source of eternal life for all who accept him. With authority he communicates a revelation for the universal church (the seven lampstands).

Reading of the Good News: John 20:10-31. It is the climax and closing chapter of John's Gospel (ch. 21 is a later inspired addition). Jesus now imparts the fruits of his salvific work: 1) three times he wishes his disciples the Easter Shalom-Peace, which he had promised them in the farewell discourses (14:27). It contains the fulness of identical mission he received from the Father, whereby they become his "apostles" or "those who are sent (from the Greek apostello: to send). 3) He imparts the Spirit, the first-fruits of the Passion-Death-Resurrection-salvation. We are reminded how God breathed on man in the beginning to make him truly human (Gen. 2:7). Now by the gift of God's Spirit, man is to become the son of God (Gal. 4:6). In Acts ch. 2, Luke describes the outpouring of the same gift from his own liturgical and theological standpoint. (Chronology is not in question). 4) Jesus truly imparts the power to forgive sins. It is exercised in the sacrament of reconciliation (Council of Trent). That the power did not die out with the death of the apostles but passed on to those who represent them as long as the Church exists on earth, is the only reasonable conclusion. Why should it be confined to the first century only, when men of all ages need to have their sins forgiven?

The doubt of Thomas and his subsequent profession of faith only serves to confirm the reader's conviction that the Apostles are proclaiming the truth about the Risen Lord, On the lips is placed the profession of faith of the entire believing community.

John follows this up with the double aim of this gospel-writing: to deepen their faith in Jesus, Messiah-King (Christ) and Son of God, and then by means of this living faith to share in the divine life which Christ imparts. This twofold purpose runs throughout the entire gospel of John and lights up every chapter.

HOMILY

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

The Human Situation: Twenty-five prisoners of war escaped from an army camp by boring a tunnel through solid rock. It must have taken them many months to accomplish the feat, because the tunnel was only wide enough for one man to work at a time. Their only tools were coal-stove shovels. What ingenuity, patience and perseverance this task took! What hardships they endured, what doubts and discouragements they encountered. Their one thought that drove them on was the freedom they would again enjoy once they escaped from prison. And of Christ it is written: "For the sake of the joy which lay before him, he endured the cross, heedless of its shame. He has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God" (Hebr. 12:2).

The Good News: The prisoners of war tunneled their way through hard rock to reach their goal. If anyone tunneled his way through hardships and sufferings to reach the desired goal it is Jesus our Savior. Only it was to free us from prison, not himself. If anyone could announce "Mission Accomplished" after a difficult task was given to him it was Christ the Lord. In today's gospel, he imparts with joy and deep serenity the fruits of his salvific work for man.

First of all, he greets his chosen band with the meaningful phrase: Shalom: Peace be to you! He had told them before he died: "My peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. Not as the world gives, do I give to you" (Jn. 14: 27). The peace of Christ imparts deep calm to the soul. It is replete with blessings which he won for us by his death and resurrection. The liturgy takes up the theme of peace just before the communion-banquet when "peace" is mentioned seven times, the number of fulness, so desirable is the Church that we really experience this fruit of the Lord's sufferings. In fact, the celebrant urges everyone to give a sign of loving peace to his companions around him.

Secondly, Jesus shares with his chosen apostles his own sending or mission which he received from the Father: As the Father

has sent me, so do I send you. This is the meaning of the word "apostle": one who is sent. This is the commission to continue the work of Christ, by going to all nations and preaching the Good News to every creature. The salvation and sanctification of man is bound up with their acceptance of the Good News, and their acting upon it by their works of faith and love. How generous is Christ the Lord to share his very mission with his friends!

Thirdly, Jesus imparts the Holy Spirit, that first fruit of his passion and death. He had longed all during life to win that Holy Spirit for man, and now with his mission accomplished, it becomes a reality. Impelled by that Holy Spirit within them, the heralds of the word go to all nations and are imbued with the power and strength to witness to Christ under all circumstances. Without the indwelling Holy Spirit, man is helpless to carry out the stupendous work of converting the world to Christ. It is the Spirit himself, working in man, that brings about this marvel.

Fourthly, Jesus shares with his chosen ones the power to forgive sins. Truly, only God can forgive sins but today's gospel makes it clear that Christ has shared this power with men. In fact, it is Christ himself who forgives sins, acting through and by means of his representatives. In the sacrament of reconciliation the priest does not say: Christ forgives you, but: I forgive you. How close is the union of Christ and his priest! It is most important, then, to have a genuine estimation of this sacrament of reconciliation and healing, by which men's sins are truly forgiven.

These are the chief fruits of Christ's work of redemption. Truly he can say: mission accomplished! Father, I have finished the work you have given me to do (Jn. 17:4). What would we be today if we did not possess the peace of Christ? What would be without the apostles and the hierarchy that succeeded them? What would we be without the gift of the Holy Spirit, and without the blessed sacrament of reconciliation? Ought we not thank God on our knees for his manifold blessings? Like Thomas, we will put our hand into the wounded side of Christ, and with deepest conviction cry out: My Lord and my God! We have not seen you but we do believe. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER (April 20, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 5:27-32.40-41. The Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit has made the Apostles fearless in bearing witness to Christ. They preach the straight truth without trying to water

down the message, and that even in front of the highest officials in Israel. Peter's reply to the high priest shows how seriously he took the command of the angel in v. 20. His sermon puts forth in digest form the same essential points of the proclamation (kerygma) as in the preceding chapters: Christ's death, resurrection and exaltation, as God-given Leader and Savior to bring reconciliation to Israel, and concluding with the outpouring of the Spirit on all who believe. Gladly the apostles share the sufferings of Jesus, being filled with the joy of the Spirit (see Lk. 6:22).

Second Reading: Revelation 5:11-14. A vision depicting the glorification of the Lamb who was slain and now lives forever. He shares the throne with the Father (22:11), receives equal honor, glory and adoration with the Father (5:13). He is the Lamb of immolation (v. 12), but by his passion and death he became the supreme Arbiter and Judge of all men. The celestial court, symbolized by the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders and innumerable angels, send forth a song of sevenfold praise in homage to him (seven being the number of fulness). The entire universe takes up the response with a mighty "Amen" (so be it) and a four-fold word of applause (four being the symbolic number of creation).

Reading of the Good News: This chapter represents an independent tradition and is an inspired appendix to the gospel already concluded in 20:30f. The Sea of Galilee was also called the Sea of Tiberias because of the important center of learning at its Southwest corner. The similarity to Lk. 5 is so great that it would seem that the author is rather giving us a symbolical presentation of theological import. The great fish-catch is a miraculous sign manifesting the power and presence of Christ. Although the meaning of the sign is first recognized by the disciple whom Jesus loved, it is Peter who takes the first initiative, signifying his pre-eminence. The net and the boat are the Church with the apostles as the fishermen of God's People. The net remains intact in spite of the great many fish enclosed in it. In the Early Church, a fish symbolized the Christian. Though 153 remains a problem, St. Jerome states that the men of his day classified that many groups of fish, (though this cannot be further ascertained), which would symbolize the universality of nations entering the Church. Jesus awaits them at the shore, and feeds them with symbols of himself, either of the Eucharist, or preferably of his divinity at the shores of eternity.

Then follows the celebrated passage of Jesus conferring the total guidance of his flock on Peter (called the primacy of jurisdiction by Vatican I). Even though he denied knowing the Master three times, he now proves his loyalty by a threefold profession of love. However, he is no longer the self-confident Peter as on

the night of the passion, but humbly states that Jesus knows how much he loves him. Thereupon Jesus makes him the Chief Shepherd of his flock. That entails following Christ closely (v. 19), suffering and even dying for the flock as Christ did. His death is foretold in veiled terms (c. 18). Tradition mentions that he was crucified upside down. Of the death of the beloved disciple Jesus makes no statement.

HOMILY

CHRIST ABIDING IN THE CHURCH

The Human Situation: Whenever you enter a Church, you will always find little red light near the tabernacle. It is the sanctuary lamp and it has a message for all who enter. It tells you that Jesus is there in the tabernacle, offering himself continually to the Father for man's salvation, and waiting for your homage and love. Day and night Jesus remains with the children of men in the sacrament of his love.

Today's Good News shows us other ways by which the Lord manifests his presence in our midst. He is present by his power assisting the Church in her work of salvation. The boat with the apostles signifies the Church in her active role of fishers of men, endeavoring to bring them into the net, to bring them to the shores of eternity. But it is Christ by his mighty power who grants her an increase of members by drawing all nations to himself. The Early Church represented the Christian with the symbol of a fish in the waters of baptism, and the number of fish represents the great number of nations that make up the Church of Christ. At times the boat of Peter is rocked by severe storms, but at other times it gathers in a host of converts, like in Africa today where Christian converts surpass yearly any other religion. In the entire world, the Church is active through many organizations, faithful workers, missionary men and women, all trying to bring the hearts of men to Christ to be saved for all eternity. It is Christ's power that is at work.

On the shore Jesus invites his chosen friends to a meal of fish and bread. Both are symbols of himself. He called himself the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:35), and the letters of the Greek word for fish (ichthys) are the first letters in Greek of the profession of faith: Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. He himself nourishes his friends with himself, now in the Eucharist, and on the shores of eternity with the reality of the divine. God is all love and through Christ he wishes to import himself to all who remain in his friendship.

Finally, Jesus wishes to remain with his flock through the ministry of those he appoints over it. He confers on Peter a very special privilege that of Chief Shepherd of the entire flock. He is to take the place of Christ as his highest representative. He is the Vicar of Christ. At first he demands of Peter a threefold protestation of his love. Peter does so, this time not with that self-confidence he boasted of the night of the passion when shortly afterwards he denied knowing Christ three times, but with great humility he now avows that Jesus knows everything and knows how much he loves him. Then three times Christ tells Peter to feed the entire flock, thus taking the place of Christ himself. (This is called the primacy of jurisdiction by Vatican I). Thus Christ is always with his Church, guiding it through the hierarchy, and drawing all men to himself by the arduous and selfless labors of his members.

What part are we playing in this missionary endeavor to save mankind and bring it to Christ? The Church is missionary by nature and every member must do his or her part of help to save mankind and bring it to Christ. It is the members who now make Christ visible by their words and deeds, but it is Christ abiding in the Church who works through his Spirit the divine work of salvation and sanctification. Until he comes... the Church must labor and toll. Only then on the shores of eternity will we enjoy the messianic banquet forever.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (April 27, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 13: 14.3-52. Paul and Barnabas, on their first missionary journey in Asia Minor, experience at first great success in spreading the Good News. Both Jews and non-Jews (pagans, Gentiles) listen eagerly. So great is the following of the pagans that it arouses the jealousy of the Jews, who soon violently oppose the missionaries, and eventually drive them away. The same pattern repeats itself in the other towns, and it becomes the occasion of Paul's turning more and more to the pagans, which in time became his universal mission. In obedience to the Master's injunction (Mt. 10:14), they shake off the dust from their feet, a symbolic gesture, disavowing any further responsibility in the conversions of those in question. Luke is contrasting the eagerness of the pagans to receive the Good News with the machinations of the Jews to oppose it.

Second Reading: Revelation 7:9.14b-17. This passage lines up with the reading of today's Good News but now it is on the shores of

eternity. Christ is now the victorious Lamb, and the flock is the huge crowd of redeemed humanity, portrayed as victors around the Lamb and the throne of the Father. They have conquered all evil by continually purifying themselves in the Lamb's Blood (his sacrificial death), that is, by means of their continued sharing in his Paschal Mystery. Now they enjoy the eternal loving care of the Father, and the Lamb shares with them all the blessings of his Spirit, symbolized by the springs of Living Water. Earth's miseries are over. Divine life is now theirs forever.

Reading of the Good News: John 10:27-30. A short passage but one replete with deep theological content: 1) Jesus knows (knowledge with love) those who belong to him, and lovingly cares for all their needs until they reach their goal. 2) They in turn gladly listen to his voice and follow him, that is, conform their lives to his. 3) The pasture land to which he is leading them is not merely a temporal one, but life that never ends, with death and all its concomitants completely conquered. 4) No one can oppose him in this not even all the powers of hell, for the flock is the Father's gift to him, and no one can take them from his "hand" (care), which is identical with that of the Father's because 5) he and the Father are one, not only in mind and will and action, but in the very Oneness of divine Being.

HOMILY

THE LORD TRULY CARES

The Human Situation: A childless couple decided to adopt a six year old boy, who was born without arms, with one eye, and flippers for legs, a victim of the sedative thalidomide drug (which has since been withdrawn from the market). Only the greatest courage and immense love enabled them to patiently teach the lad, who was an intelligent boy, to gradually help himself, and do without the cumbersome artificial limbs. Though the husband's salary was meager, and debts as well as bills often started him in face, he manifested remarkable inventiveness by inventing one vehicle after another to enable the lad to do everything by himself, by means of gadgets plus his own usable muscles. The wife's initial fright and reluctance were conquered by sheer love. Today the lad has his own house and garden, goes to school and back on his own, and plans his own future. A superb triumph of loving care of two devoted people who overcame every obstacle by hard work and sheer love.

The Good News: The Lord chose a particularly appealing comparison to describe his loving care for his own. It is the loving care of a shepherd for his sheep, which is proverbial. The shepherd knows his sheep individually from the moment they are born, and he has the greatest interest in their well-being. He even gives a special mark teach one to denote ownership. He guards them sedulously from the foe that seeks to destroy them, and leads them faithfully to good pasture and streams of water. The Savior's love for every member of his Body, the Church, is a loving knowledge which is inexpressible. With what love he sacrificed himself for each one, gave each one an indelible mark in baptism, nourishes each one with his own Body and Blood, guards each one by his Indwelling Spirit from the Evil One, cleanses the sheep that falls into the mire of sin, and leads it to the good pastures of his divine words, and eventually to the eternal shores, to give them life that never ends. There is not the least selfish interest in the actions of Christ. He does all things because he loves man. That is why he became man; to manifest that love.

The sheep on the other hand know the voice of their shepherd. They follow wherever he leads them because they trust him. They know he will not lead them to injurious pastures or harmful waters, because he has at heart only their well-being. So, too, the sheep of the Divine Shepherd follow him eagerly, which means that they want to conform their lives to his more and more. Following Christ is a real challenge. It means denying oneself, as Jesus himself declared, taking up one's daily cross, and following in his footsteps. They strive to deny themselves and put away the former deeds which do not reflect the Christ life of his true followers. It means learning from him those virtues which he has so clearly taught us in the Good News: his love for all men, his forgiveness of injuries, his willingness to come to the aid of anyone in need, his life of prayer and submission to the Father's will. The following of Christ is no small venture, but it carries with it the sharing of his glory.

In the hands, that is, in the care of the Good Shepherd the sheep are safe. Satan will attempt to draw them away from the Shepherd by the false allurements of the world, by the poison of immoral advertisements, by the unruly desires of the flesh and by the inordinate ambitions of pride. But if the sheep keep their eyes on the Shepherd and do not deliberately stray from the fold, they are safe. He and the Father have the same vital interest in them, for they both love each one with their identical Spirit of Love. Only if the sheep of their own free will separate themselves from him or from the flock, do they risk the danger of being lost and devoured by the Evil One. The Father in heaven wants all to be saved and

through his Son, the Good Shepherd, he is constantly drawing all men to the eternal shores, so that they can enjoy the delights of the Godhead eternally.

How great is the Christian calling! What dignity the Christian enjoys! If the love of the Good Shepherd does not succeed in winning a return of love from the heart of man, what will succeed? He has used every possible means to win us to himself. Only sheer ingratitude and apathetic indifference will keep man away from that loving Heart, that has so loved man. Are we responding to that love?

BIBLICAL NOTES AND HOMILIES FOR MAY

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

(May 4, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 14:21-27. On their return trip during their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas visited the communities they had founded, and made it very clear that in the plan of God, suffering and trials were part of their Christian calling. They also set up in each community a definite organized body, by appointing religious leaders. Since the Eucharist with liturgical prayer was the backbone of the Christian community from the very outset (see 2:42), it is only reasonable to suppose that these religious leaders were ordained ministers to preside over those functions. Any wise organizer would do the same. (To state that Luke is here anticipating a later Church institution is a gratuitous assertion). On returning to the mother church, they report their great success in the Gentile (pagan) world, with humble recognition of the divine source of their success.

Second Reading: Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23. Here we have God's end-kingdom in its glorious fulfillment. Entire creation is transformed, befitting regenerated humanity. All hostile forces (symbolized by the violent and raging waters of the sea) are put out of the way. New Jerusalem, the glorified People of God, shining bright in her holiness, is now the Bride of Christ forever. In Christ, God and man are united in an everlasting nuptial bliss. All the evils of this mortal life have completely vanished forever. Joy, peace and love of the Spirit reign supreme for endless ages.

Reading of the Good News John 13:31-33a, 34-35. At the last supper, once Judas is no longer present, Jesus unbosoms himself in sentiments that had best be given in three themes:

1) The theme of glory: God's glory is a manifestation of his inner Being. For God's People of old, it was chiefly in his power and majesty (Sinai, Ezekiel's vision), but in Jesus it is chiefly God's immense love. The love of Christ is most forcefully manifested by his sufferings and death for all mankind, which simultaneously manifests the love of the Father. In turn, the Father will manifest his love for the Son by the far-reaching effects of the resurrection and the exaltation at the Father's right, mighty and godlike beyond all estimation.

2) The theme of separation: It is made necessary for a while by his death. Jesus announces it most tenderly, using the term "children" (teknia), an expression found in John's Gospel only here.

3) The theme of fraternal love. It returns over and over again in the following chapters, like a last will and testament. The disciples are to imitate to the full his own love for them, heroic to the extreme, coming to expression by his life of utter service and total self-sacrifice. Such love would reveal the genuine disciple, as it revealed on the part of Jesus the true inner Being of God. Though love was enjoined on God's People of old, it is now new, both in its ideal (Jesus himself) and in its extension (universal love for all).

HOMILY

THE LAST WILL OF JESUS

The Human Situation: It is a fact that when a person dies and the will is read out to the heirs, it is something hotly disputed, and there arises between the claimants a deep resentment and even hatred which keeps them from speaking to each other for years. This is especially ugly if it is the immediate family where the sons and daughters are at variance with one another because of the will, and refuse to speak to each other for a long period of time. Family reunions are impossible and instead of love there is hatred. Yet they claim to be Christians.

The Good News: Jesus did not leave his chosen friends any money or property to dispute about, nor anything in the line of worldly goods. When he died, he owned practically nothing. They raffled off his garments and laid him in someone else's tomb. His last will was a spiritual one and was in the form of a command: "Love one another as I have loved you". It was this concern to call themselves Christians would really learn how much God loved them in the Son, and then try their level best to learn what it means to love their fellowmen as he loved them.

Have you ever given much thought to how our Lord and Savior loved us? He could so easily have redeemed us by any number of easy ways, but he chose the hardest of all, that is, the horrible Roman crucifixion, where he was mocked and cursed, stripped and nailed to the cross, called an imposter and cast out from his people as a criminal, hanging exposed before the sight of every passerby. Only love could have made him go to such an extreme to convince man of God's love for him. No wonder the Beloved Disciple, St. John, exclaims: "Love consists in this: not that we have loved God, but that he has loved us and has sent his Son as an offering for our sins" (1 Jn. 4:10). He continues immediately: "Beloved, if God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another" (v. 11).

But what do we see in the Christian world today? Wars, riots, dissension, rivalry. And at times even in the homes of Christians, continual arguing and fighting, to the disgust of the children and the scandal of the neighbors. Truly, Christ's command is not easy. It takes a determined will to overcome selfishness and reach out to others as Christ has reached out to us. Selfishness, greed, and anger prevent love from healing the inner wounds which love alone could heal. Love melts the cold of selfishness, changes greed into generosity, turns anger into forgiveness and understanding. Love can do all things, if it is only given sway.

Praise the Lord! There are many hearts and homes in which true Christian love reigns, and who go out of their way to let Christ's love burn brightly to all around. They are the true disciples and followers of Jesus. For them, success is not measured by money or possessions, but by the degree of love they have been able to acquire by earnestly following the command of Jesus and his counsels as given in the Sermon on the Mount. There they have found any number of practical suggestions given by Jesus how to practice the highest of virtues, love, the acme of perfection. "There remain these three things: Faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13).

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

(May 11, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 15:1-2,22-29. Paul was convinced that Christ's sacrifice of himself was all-sufficient for man's salvation, be he Jew or pagan. While the moral law was perfected by his Coming (Mt. 5:17), the many laws regarding ceremonial worship, food

restrictions, circumcision and a host of other legalities were meant to prepare men for his Coming (Gal. 4:23f), but were abrogated by his death and resurrection (Col. 2:16f; Hb. 8:10; 9:10). When some convert Jews began insisting on circumcision as a requisite for the convert pagans to be saved, Paul and Barnabas strenuously opposed this, and the matter was relayed to Jerusalem. There, the authorities in the Christian community decided the matter and an apostolic letter was sent to Antioch. Note how the Apostles are fully convinced they act under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Paul and Barnabas are fully vindicated in their views. Christ's salvific work is all sufficient for salvation, provided it is accepted by the individual. However, pagan converts were requested to abstain from certain usages which were offensive to Jewish sensitivities, living as they were in a plurality society. Three of the points regard abstinence from certain foods, and the last pertains to sexual unions within certain degrees of kinship, which was quite prevalent among the pagans. It was a local ordinance intended for the provinces of Asia Minor mentioned in the letter.

Second Reading: Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23. A dazzling vision of the glorified People of God, the New Jerusalem, transfigured by the very glory of God, glittering like diamonds as was the throne of God in 4:3. Square in the Greek symbol of perfection as is the number twelve for the Semite, hence representing both the Greek and the Jewish world. Those who dwell in the New Jerusalem are symbolized by the representative names of Israel's twelve tribes and the Lamb's twelve apostles, thus combining into one the entire regenerated humanity of old and new covenants. Angelic guardians complete the picture. The temple which indicated God's presence to the People of old, gives way to the Reality and Presence of God himself and the Lamb in the glory of the beatific vision. Created light is now superfluous, for God is Light itself, beamed through the Triumphant Lamb of God. What hope this vision inspires!

Reading of the Good News: John 14:23-29. A passage full of theological import: 1) While awaiting Christ's glorious return, sincere lovers of him will observe his instructions, and thus be blessed with the stupendous gift of the Divine Indwelling, involving a most intimate friendship with the Blessed Trinity, the Father giving them his Love (the Spirit), who together with Father and Son come to take up permanent abode in man. Worldlings will not enjoy this intimacy because of lack of faith and obedience to Christ's message. 2) Christ's message of Good News is the Father's will for all men. Nothing more beneficial can be imagined. If only man would heed it! 3) Though Christ's mission is about to end, he promises the

gift of the Paraclete, the Helper, who is sent in his name, that is, he will make known who Jesus really is (the name) and also the fullness of his revealed message. 4) Shalom-Peace is not merely the parting Oriental farewell phrase, but it is transformed by Jesus into a parting gift of himself (he is our peace; Eph. 2:14), a gift fraught with all possible blessings of peace, harmony and love. 5) If their love for Jesus is selfless, they will not grieve over his departure, but rejoice with him, for his mission is about to climax in glorification and exaltation. 6) Although Father and Son are one in Being (10:30), the Father is the supreme goal of Jesus life, and the source from which he proceeded. To do his will in the work of salvation is Christ's whole ambition as Man. His whole human existence is a "going to the Father." In this sense the Father is greater than he. 7) Fulfillment of his words will corroborate his divine knowledge and be an added proof of his divine mission.

HOMILY

HIDDEN TREASURE

The Human Situation: Some things that man treasures most are found deep in the earth, as for instance, diamonds, the hardest of all precious substances and most valuable in man's eyes. Even in the South African mines, which are the richest source of gem diamonds in the world, many tons of "blue ground" must be taken from deep in the earth, crushed, and sorted to obtain one small diamond. Gold and silver veins (lodes) are also deep in the earth. From earliest times, man has treasured these precious metals and dug laboriously to obtain them. Once possessed, they were carefully guarded and treasured.

The Good News: Deep in the heart of every believer is the greatest of treasures. If the Lord himself had not revealed it in today's Gospel-message, who would have believed it? That God is everywhere present by his essence and his power, because he is infinite, can be known by reason alone, but that the Three Divine Persons, the Blessed Trinity, dwell lovingly in the heart of those who enjoy God's friendship (that is, are in the state of sanctifying grace) can only be known by revelation. Jesus himself revealed it when he declared: "Anyone who loves me, will be true to my word, and I will love him; we will come to him and make our dwelling-place with him always." Father and Son breathing forth Love, which is their personal Spirit, come to dwell in little man!

Take not that the Indwelling of the Blessed Trinity is not just a passing event, like a visit from some high dignitary to the home of a friend, but it is permanent; We will make our dwelling place with him always". What a privilege for God's friends to have with them always, wherever they are, on land or sea, in the air or deep in the earth or under the sea, this Treasure of divine Love! We have the word of the Lord for it. He promised it to those who are true to his word.

What does that mean: to be true to his word? It means to take his message serious, to examine it carefully, live it out, model our lives on what Christ demands. The one great demand of Christ is that we love one another, our neighbors, and what is perhaps the hardest of all, our adversaries and those who make life hard for us: "Love your enemies, pray for your persecutors. This will prove that you are sons of your heavenly Father . . . If you love those who love you, what merit is therein that?" (Mt. 5:44ff). This is the love Jesus showed all men while on earth: he instructed he cured, he fed, he clarified his teaching, he reproved when salutary; But above all, from the cross he forgave all who did him harm, all from a motive of love. Not once did Jesus seek any remuneration or salary for all his deeds. He labored sheerly out of love, to redeem man from his sins, to teach him the way of salvation, to win for him peace on this earth and salvation forever. He asks all his followers to be motivated in their daily duties out of love.

In order that the friends of God can return adequate love to him, Jesus promises that the Father would send in his name the Spirit of Love, the Paraclete, Helper and Consoler. He will enable weak little man to conquer all selfishness, and render a proper return of love to the Indwelling Trinity. It is he who cries in our hearts: Abba Father (Gal. 4:6). It is he who enables us to profess that Jesus is Lord (1 Cor. 12:3). Only with the Spirit moving us can we love God in return as he wishes to be loved.

Do we ever stop to ponder on this Treasure in our hearts? If man guards so sedulously his diamond mines and gold mines, should we not be more aware of this infinite Treasure in our very possession and guard it carefully, lest we lose it? We lose the friendship of God by seriously offending him. No wonder St. Leo the Great cried out: O Christian! Recognize your dignity! And Blessed Arnold Janssen could walk up and down arm in arm with one of the older members of his congregation exclaiming over and over: O beata Trinitas! O Blessed Trinity! Our resolve is to be more aware of the Treasure we possess, so that we may come to possess God Holy and Triune one day in the bliss of the beatific vision. Until then let us guard this Treasure sedulously so as never to lose it.

SOLEMNITY OF THE LORD'S ASCENSION
(May 18, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 1:1-11. The period after the resurrection of Jesus was of the greatest importance for the chosen band. He continued to give them proofs of his being alive, so that they would be staunch witnesses of that fact. He also concentrated on the special preparation needed for their role in the believing community where God would reign. Furthermore, he impressed upon them the importance of the Spirit, the promised Gift of the Father, in which they would be invested (baptized). "Forty days" is symbolic, and used by Luke as it often used in the Old Testament for a definite period of preparation for a specific work, as for example, Moses receiving divine instructions on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:18).

Jesus also corrects their idea of a temporal kingdom and of an imminent Parousia or Second Coming. At first there lay before them the gigantic task of bearing witness to all nations on earth, something they could only perform properly when endowed with the Spirit.

In describing the Ascension, Luke is emphasizing the parting of the Lord's visible presence. His manner of describing it belongs to his literary technique as author, to drive home his point. Both Luke and John in their Gospel accounts give the impression that Easter and Ascension took place on the same day, but that is a theological perspective. Here in the Acts, Luke's perspective is symbolic, and may be connected with the end of the forty days when Moses received the Law, while the forty days after the resurrection are in preparation for the New Law of Love which is the gift of the Spirit.

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:17-23. Paul's prayer for his Christians is intimately bound up with the Father, the Son and the gifts of the Spirit. Its objects is that they clearly know God (wisdom) and appreciate his work in them (insight). Such insight involves a better understanding of their calling, a fuller appreciation of the riches of their inheritance, and a deeper grasp of God's power working within them. That power is identical with the power at work in Christ's resurrection, his exaltation at God's right hand, making him superior to every possible created being, giving him universal domination, and thus supremely exalted, constituting him Head of the Church. Thus the future of the Christian is inconceivably great.

The Church is both the Body of Christ and his fulness. The word "fulness" in all five passages where it occurs in the "captivity

letters" is used to signify with great emphasis the concentration of sanctifying power of God (Cerfaux). This has been concentrated in Christ, God's primordial sacrament for man's salvation, and he in turn concentrated it in his Body-Person, the Church, which as his extension on earth is likewise the fundamental sacrament which communicates Christ and salvation to men (by various avenues of grace). God is the fulness which lives in Christ, and eventually will replenish regenerated humanity (Rev. 21:22-24).

Reading of the Good News: Luke 24:46-53. In giving his last injunction to his chosen ones, the Lord 1) reminds them that his passion and death were foretold, and thus were in the plan of God for man's salvation. 2) He sends them out in his name and authority, with a message of reconciliation coupled with a call for a change of heart (metanoia). 3) He orders them to begin with the chosen people at Jerusalem, but not before they were invested with the Father's Promise, the mighty Spirit, by whom they would be enabled to be his staunch witnesses.

The Lord's last gesture was one of priestly blessing (see Sir. 50:20). Then he was taken from them visibly. Luke projects all this on the day of the resurrection from his theological perspective, so that he can end his gospel in Jerusalem where it began, namely, in the temple where God dwelt with men. Only now it is the true Temple, the Lord Jesus, in whom all continue to praise the Father. Their final act is one of adoration of him in whom they now believe, and of joy, in accordance with the word of Jesus in Jn. 14:28, and in acceptance of their noble mission.

HOMILY

REJECTED BY MEN, BUT EXALTED ON HIGH BY GOD

The Human Situation: A very striking resemblance to Christ is the figure of Joseph of Egypt whose life is described by the Holy Spirit in the book of Genesis in such a way as to prefigure in striking details the life of Jesus. Joseph was also the beloved of his Father, he was sent on a mission to his brothers, he was rejected by them, sold for twenty pieces of silver, falsely accused and imprisoned between two malefactors of which one was pardoned, vindicated as innocent and raised to the highest throne in Egypt after Pharaoh. In the years of famine he became the Savior of the People, and of his own brethren, whom he forgave and cared for with great solicitude. It is easy to see the resemblance in all these details with Jesus who was similarly treated, rejected by his own, and then

raised on high to share the throne of the Most High in heaven. **The Good News:** The Ascension of the Lord is his exaltation at the Father's right hand. Now he whom his own people rejected is raised to the throne of the Father. Now all mankind acknowledge that he whom they crucified has become the Cornerstone of God's Building and the True Spiritual Temple. Now all people come to him asking for pardon and forgiveness of their sins. All look to him to be their shepherd and to nourish them with food that sustains. How well the hymn of the Early Church expressed it: "He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit; seen by the angels; preached among the nations; believed in throughout the world; taken up into glory" (1 Tim. 3:16).

The Feast of the Ascension gives every believing Christian hope. The trials of this life are often weighing heavily on one's shoulders, but St. Paul reminds us that "we are heirs of God, heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so as to be glorified with him" (Rom. 8:17). Today the entire Body of Christ looks up to their glorified Head with new vigor and courage, because it sees what lies ahead after this valley of tears has passed. God does not give man suffering for suffering sake. Suffering is the paved road to exaltation and glory, provided one suffers with Christ the Savior.

It is with good reason that today's second reading gives us the prayer of Paul for his Christians. In it we see the broad vistas of the Apostle's mind as we paraphrase. May God grant you a spirit of wisdom to know him clearly and the insight to realize that all the trials of life are preparatory for the glory to come. May your inner vision be enlightened so that you grasp the great things in store for you, which hope holds out to you; the wealth of your inheritance in Christ is inestimable. The scope of his power will work similarly as it worked in Christ, raising you from the dead and placing you at the throne of God in heaven.

Dearly beloved, let us go forth today, reassured by Christ himself who is our exalted Head, knowing for sure that if we remain faithful to him here below in the tasks and calling he has given us, we shall be united to him in the possession of his glory in the realms above. May the peace of Christ remain always with you!

PENTECOST SUNDAY

(May 25, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 2:1-11. Pentecost in Israel was a harvest festival (Ex. 23:16). Thus it symbolized fulfillment and from that aspect St. Luke depicts the outpouring of the Spirit, for it is the fulfill-

ment of the salvific work of Jesus. It was celebrated seven weeks or fifty days after Passover, and hence was called Pentecosté the Greek word for fifty. Fifty was the sacred number of the jubilee year, which signalled the remission of all debts and a new start for the People of God (Lev. 25:6). It is these theological dimensions of Pentecost that Luke has in mind rather than any stress on chronology. Pentecost is thus seen as the fulfillment of Christ's Paschal Mystery, when the believing community came alive with the life of the Spirit of Christ.

The Promised Gift is that of the invisible Spirit of God himself (v. 4) who is communicated to all present. Clearly to be distinguished from this divine invisible Gift is the visible and ostensible manifestation of his Presence in the charism of tongues poured out on those present. In this scene, the object of the charism of tongues is the public praise of God for his marvellous deeds (v. 11), above all for the accomplishment of the Paschal Mystery of the Savior, the fruit of which is the gift of the Spirit. Luke is also possibly giving us an idealized picture of the Early Church, comprising events that happened over a longer period of time, for he is writing a theology of events. His essential message is that the Spirit of God is the great Gift of the Father and the Son for the entire believing community in the final age.

By the power of this Spirit, the Apostles are endowed from on high to proclaim everywhere (with tongues of fire!) to all nations the mighty salvific work of God. Luke's "table of nations" is a selection of peoples of the then known Mediterranean world, symbolizing all nations united in the one community of Christ by and in his Spirit, the Bond of union and love. Thus the events at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11) are reversed. Salvation is universal, and for all nations, but gained by belonging to the New People of God.

Wind, fire, tongues (for speech) all symbolize the Spirit. In both Hebrew and Greek, spirit and wind are identical words (*ruach*, *pneuma*), though Luke uses a slightly different word here, yet from the same root. John, the Baptizer foretold that Jesus would immerse his followers in Spirit and fire (Lk. 3:16). Tongues, coming from a central source, indicate that one and same divine Spirit is imparted to all, to speak the new language of the Spirit to the world, the message of love concerning Christ and his universal salvific work, to which the Spirit bears constant witness.

Second Reading: First Corinthians 12:3b-7.12-13. A passage rich in content. Paul writes to the Corinthian community which experienced the abundance of Spirit's charismatic outpouring. Yet he makes clear that the primary activity of the indwelling Spirit is to enable the Christian to confess the divinity and sovereignty

of Jesus (12:3). Only then does he mention the gifts of the Spirit (which include here various ministries and functions). Moreover, it is the same identical Spirit at work in everyone, imparting his gifts to the individual members as he pleases, but all for the benefit of the whole body (v.7). Comparing the Body of Christ with the human body, Paul shows the necessity of variety functions. That all should have the same function is against the very notion of an organized body. So also in the Body of Christ, each member contributes in his own way and by means of his particular gift to the good of the whole community. What one member accomplishes affects all the others.

The reality of our incorporation into the Body-Person of the glorified Christ is clearly asserted by authors today: "Baptism incorporates the Christian into the risen, glorified Body of Christ, so that the Church is the manifestation and extension of the Lord's Body in this world. Its members share in the life of the Risen Lord" (Jerome Bibl. Comm.). Paul can speak of "drinking of the Spirit" since Jesus referred to the Spirit as the "Living Water" (Jn. 4:10: 7:38f).

Reading of the Good News: John 20:19-23. Since the outpouring of the Spirit climaxes the entire salvific work of Jesus or his Paschal Mystery, John wishes to portray this close connection between the giving of the Spirit and the resurrection-event, before bringing his gospel-account to a close (originally ch. 20). It is not the time element that John is indicating but a theological dimension (which differs from Luke's in Acts 2). In order that the Apostles (that is, those sent, from the Greek word "apostello", to send) carry out the identical mission that Jesus received from the Father, he breathes into them the Spirit (symbolized by the breath of Jesus), so that they in turn, as other Christs, continue his work of transforming the world by cleansing it from sin, and re-creating it in the Spirit (see Gen. 12). Since the mandate of Christ is both to forgive and to retain sins of the believers, the duty incumbent on the ministers of Christ is to judge the sins so as to act properly. But one cannot judge without the believers making known their sins, or confessing them. Hence the integral part of the sacrament of penance is confession of sins.

OUTLINE FOR HOMILY TAKEN FROM THE ABOVE NOTES:

A. HOMILY FROM FIRST READING:

1. Pentecost is fulfillment. O.T. harvest festival: harvest completed. Fifty is jubilee number. Remission of all debts. new start. N.T. fulfillment of Christ's Paschal Mystery. New People of God come alive in his Spirit.

2. **Essential message of the passage:** the Gift of the Spirit in person. Charism of tongues a subsequent manifestation of his Presence. Object of charism: praise of God from all nations for his wonderful works esp. in Christ.
3. **Idealized picture of the universal Church:** many nations, one Body, one Spirit. Reversal of Babel (confusion). Pentecost: unity, harmony, oneness.
4. **Apostles endowed with the Spirit preach with tongues of fire about Christ.** Wind, fire, tongues all symbols of the mighty Spirit of love. The work of the world's conversion has begun.

Conclusion The Church is missionary. Moved by the Indwelling Spirit, all members of Christ should make Christ and his salvific message known to their fellowmen, and praise God for his marvellous works. Praise the Lord! Alleluia.

B. HOMILY FROM THE SECOND READING:

1. The primary activity of the Indwelling Spirit is enabling us to witness to the divinity and sovereignty of Christ. Christ is Lord!
2. Each member is moreover given a special charism, calling, ministry, but all function for the good of the whole Body, the Body of Christ, moved by the same Spirit who imparted to each one as he pleased.
3. Variety of functions belongs to the very notion of an organized body. All cannot have the same function. No room for vanity or for jealousy.

Conclusion: Be open to the Spirit, and develop the gifts given by him, so as to glorify the Father and build up the Body of Christ in love.

C. HOMILY FROM THE GOOD NEWS:

1. The threefold action of Christ: he imparts the blessings of his peace, he gives them further proof of his resurrection, he shares with the apostles his own mission. They make him visible and continue his work.

2. The outpouring of the Spirit, symbolized by the breath of Christ. This is the climax of Christ's Paschal Mystery. John brings it in here before closing his gospel-account, to show their close connection. The Spirit is the first fruit of his Paschal Mystery and its climax.
3. The apostles and those who represent them are empowered to forgive sins or retain them. A stupendous power but clearly stated. To make this distinction one must judge and discern. Therefore the need of confessing one's sins to those empowered.

Conclusion Pentecost brings peace, the gift of the Spirit, the prolongation of Christ's mission in the Church, the power to forgive sins. O the goodness of God whose love so cares for man!