

Brothers and sisters,

If you've been reading these (*rather long*) columns, you've spent the past five weeks reading about the foundational story of the gospel message, the kerygma. Even though the columns were plenty lengthy, there is a lot more that could be said to fill in some details to the story. As I mentioned before, there will be an opportunity for that coming up at some point this year. In the meantime, I imagine you might be saying something like, "*Now what do I do?*" You could be asking that question with a tone of exasperation, excitement, eagerness, or anything in between. Either way, you're in good company, especially if there is some earnest desire in your heart. Let's look at the book that comes immediately after the Gospels: *The Acts of the Apostles*.

In Acts chapter 2, we know the famous moment of Pentecost occurs. The Holy Spirit descends upon the community of disciples praying the Upper Room – Mary, the Apostles, other disciples – and the community starts speaking in different languages, all praising God, and yet they are all able to understand each other. Crazy! Some onlookers mock them, so Peter gets up to proclaim the Kerygma to these onlookers. He finishes his sermon in verse 36: "*Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.*" What is their response? Are they offended that Peter would be so forward with them? Are they outraged that he would be so presumptuous as to boldly proclaim Jesus to be the Lord and Christ? We should keep reading.

Verse 37 says that they "*were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'*" Instead of being outraged or offended, God is somehow able to work in their hearts to provide a hunger, a desire to know how they can live in a righteous relationship with God. They want to reconcile the situation in any way possible. Amazing! These men, who crucified Jesus, now want to follow Jesus! Very simply, they are prepared to become disciples of Jesus. Not merely people who know about Jesus or who watch him from a distance, but people who have a real relationship with him and live according to his commandments. Brothers and sisters, this is the result of someone who has been overwhelmed by the gospel message, by the kerygma. They hear the message and are moved to surrender their lives – their preferences, their desires, their previous disposition – to the will of God revealed through the apostles.

Before we move any further, I think we should pause for some reflection questions:

- Have I been so moved by the gospel message that I am ready and willing to surrender myself to God's will?
- Am I prepared to become or grow as a disciple of Jesus, not merely knowing about him or watching from a distance, but someone who has a daily, lived relationship with him?
- Am I willing to lay aside my preferences, my desires, my dispositions, etc. in favor of following the commandments of Jesus?

These people in Acts 2 heard the gospel just as we've heard the gospel. Now we can respond in the same way that they did by surrendering our lives to him at all costs.

May the Lord give you his peace!

Fr. Bryan