

3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER (B)

THE CHRISTIAN AS A WITNESS OF CHRIST

When Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples several times, assuring them that He still loved them. He also made them aware that indeed he had risen with the human body, and not a ghost. He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and all that the Law and the Prophets spoke about Him. Then He told them they were witnesses. Before He ascended into heaven, he told them to remain in Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit who would help them to be His witnesses. He said; "You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit which will come on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the end of the earth," (Acts 1:8).

Today we hear St. Peter bearing witness to Christ that He is the Righteous One, and the Author of life. St. John is also saying the same thing that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One, who is our Advocate. They were witnesses because they saw Him, walked with Him, touched Him, and ate with Him, and they had faith in Him, empowered by the Holy Spirit. "Something which has existed since the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have watched and touched with our own hands, the Word of life - this is our theme. That life was made visible, we saw it and are giving our testimony," (1Jn. 1:1-2a).

Their witnessing went beyond just proclaiming the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. They witnessed by the way they lived their lives with those who believed their message. "The whole group of believers was united heart and soul; no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, as everything they owned was held in common. The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and they were all accorded great respect. None of their members was ever in want," (Acts 4:32-34); Each day, with one heart, they regularly went to the Temple but met in their homes for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and they were looked up to by everyone," Acts 2:46-47). That was the new life in the Spirit. They lived as the Easter people, filled with joy and gladness amidst persecutions from the elders and scribes.

How can a christian of today be a witness of Christ since he has not had the same experience as the apostles had? Even though we have not seen Jesus as the apostles did, we have had some share of the experiences in different ways. We have the Eucharist; He has left us His commandments, and above all we have received the Holy Spirit as they did. However, our ability to be

witnesses depends on the faith we have in what we read from the Scriptures. So there is the need for conversion of heart, repentance from our sins, and live a new life through the power of the Holy Spirit which we have received. John assures us that we have an Advocate in heaven interceding for us at the right hand of God. This should give us confidence that our efforts to repent will yield good fruits. It is also to bring us joy that we shall have a share in the everlasting happiness in the kingdom of God.

Do we have witnesses in the Church? Who are they and where are they? We cannot point to any one or look for one any where. You and I are supposed to be witnesses of Christ. His address, "you are my witnesses", includes you and me. But have we even crossed the first line of conversion and repentance? Many of us are lukewarm Catholics; we are neither hot nor cold, and since we are neither hot nor cold God will spit us out His mouth; (Rev. 3:15-16). Many of us are not keen about living our Christian lives in such a way that we become witnesses for those around us to know what Christ has done.

We are to witness by the way we gather every Sunday or weekday and break bread together like the early believers. It seems that even our welcoming at the beginning of mass is a big problem for some of us. It is difficult for us to reach out to others. Gathering as a community for other functions other than celebrating mass is another way of testifying to Christ that we believe in Him.

Our conversations with people, and our interactions with those who are not Christians, or Catholics should let them realize that we are resurrected people. Christ has brought us hope of eternal life so every day we should have in mind to live a repentant life, a sign that we are ready to be His witnesses.