

Saint Peter June 29

Morning Prayer

First Lesson: Ezek 3:4-11

Second Lesson Acts 4:8-20

Homily

Humanly speaking,
the religious leaders of Jerusalem
were quite right to be afraid
of this new movement.
This Jesus, their leader,
had been a colossal nuisance.
He'd missed no occasion
to expose their hypocrisy,
the inner rot that was masked by their piety,
and to show them for what they really were.
But they thought they had got rid of him
when they engineered His crucifixion.

Not so!

Now this Peter
and his ragtag group of about a hundred,
had poured into the streets
and made a few thousand new converts.

We enter the story
just after Peter had boldly healed a lame man,

loudly speaking the name of Jesus of Nazareth.
Something had to be done.

They arrested Peter and John
and ordered them to stop speaking in that name.

*"But Peter and John answered and said unto them,
'Whether it be right in the sight of God
to hearken unto you more than unto God,
judge ye. For we cannot but speak
the things which we have seen and heard.' "*

Ultimately, after some years,
this Peter was killed for doing just that,
and today's color is red in remembrance
of the blood he shed for His Lord.

The Prophet Ezekiel could well
have been speaking directly to Peter,
and to us in the First Lesson:

*"[They] will not hearken unto thee; ...
Behold,
I have made thy face strong against their faces,
and thy forehead strong against their foreheads.
As an adamant harder than flint
have I made thy forehead:
fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks,
though they be a rebellious house."*

*Moreover he said unto me,
Son of man,
all my words that I shall speak unto thee
receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears.*

*And go, get thee to them of the captivity,
unto the children of thy people,
and speak unto them, and tell them,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
whether they will hear,
or whether they will forbear.*

You see, the mighty of this world
have reason to fear
when the truth of God is proclaimed.
In the blinding light of Truth
they are shown for who they are,
just as the priests and the Pharisees were in those
days.

It's no better today.
In China, in Islamic countries, in other places,
Christians are under attack,
rightly seen as a threat to the powers that be,
for whether in hypocrisy or in honesty,
their program is in opposition to that of God.
Even here, who has not noticed
the increasing difficulties being placed in the way
of the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ

and of its living out in the world?

Things don't really change very much.
Humanity is a fallen race.
Sin, evil, and oppression abound,
and there is no human power
that can eliminate the problem.
The world needs a savior.

There is a Savior, Christ Jesus the Lord.
We, just as surely as St. Peter,
every one of us,
have been sent into this world
to speak of Him,
and to show by our lives and actions,
the truth, power, and hope
of His Cross and Resurrection.

Let us go forth in the Name
and in the power of Christ,
with the indwelling presence of the Spirit
to do the work He has left for us to do,
knowing that, as we do so,
we are supported by the prayers
of St. Peter and all the saints in heaven.

Let us pray.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, we pray thee, at the intercession of blessed Peter the Apostle, to bless and sanctify the lives of thy people, to cleanse us from the defilements of all our iniquities, to bless, protect and guide us that in words and deeds we may proclaim salvation in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

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Evening Prayer

First Lesson: Ezek 34:11-16

Second Lesson: John 21:15-22

Homily

Peter had denied the Lord three times, just as Jesus had predicted, even though he'd hotly argued, "Never!". That's how he showed his famous boldness, while the most important and most unfair trial of all time was underway, while His Lord was tried, sentenced, and executed.

The rooster crowed, and Peter cried.

After He had risen from the dead, Jesus firmly but gently called Peter to task, graciously allowing him to take back his horrible words of a few days before.

Three times Jesus quietly asked, "Peter, do you love me?" Three times Peter responded, "You know I do."

thoroughly pained that Jesus was asking. The third time, perhaps, he remembered. Yes, his Lord knew that he loved him, but what evidence was there?

There was that terrible betrayal and the Master knew that too. It didn't look as though he loved Him. Peter grieved, perhaps with more tears.

And, for the third time Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." Maybe He was telling him, "You failed me then, but there is work to do, and you won't fail me now."

Peter had succumbed to his fears on that day, but that was not going to happen at the end. Our Lord promised him what he had tried to avoid, and promised it as a badge of honor, and an entrance into glory.

"When you are old, you will stretch forth your hands, (on a cross, he meant), and die.

Today once again, nearly two thousand years later, we remember that day. The color is red, red for the blood of a martyr, spilled and mingled with that of his Lord.

That death came when he was indeed old,
when he had spent a lifetime feeding the sheep,
serving the church for which the Savior had died,
preaching the Word as manna from heaven,
sharing the meal of the Body and Blood,
leading on the highway of holiness,
as a faithful undershepherd of the Lord's flock.

We heard Ezekiel speaking for the Lord,
speaking of His love for the flock he redeemed,
speaking in words that Peter also could say,
and all the Apostles,
and all the Bishops and clergy down to this day,
as well as every one of us
in the callings we receive:

*"... I will both search my sheep,
and seek them out. ...
... will deliver them out of all places
where they have been scattered
in the cloudy and dark day.
... gather them from the countries, and
... bring them ... and feed them ...
in a good pasture ...
there shall they lie in a good fold, ...
I will feed my flock,
and I will cause them to lie down, ...
I will seek that which was lost, ..."*

*and bring again that which was driven away,
and will bind up that which was broken,
and will strengthen that which was sick: ..."*

That is what the Lord promised.
That is what St. Peter did.
Is it our desire?

Let us pray.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, we pray thee, at the intercession of blessed Peter the Apostle, to bless and sanctify the lives of thy people, to cleanse us from the defilements of all our iniquities, to bless, protect and guide us that in words and deeds we may proclaim salvation in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.