

Sunday, May 15, 2022 – Fifth Sunday of Easter

First Reading: Acts 11:1-18

*The news of what Peter had done got to Jerusalem sooner than Peter did.
Cf. scene in the movie, "Grease"*

The conversion of Paul on the road to Damascus is so central to the book of Acts that it is included three times – in chapter 9 when it happened, and then two more times when Paul told about it, in chapters 22 and 26.

Peter's going to the house of Cornelius is also so central that it is included two times – in chapter 10 when it happened, and in chapter 11 when Peter told about it.

1-4 - Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, saying, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step.

What all did God do in order to make sure that Peter got the point?

When was in a time in your life when God did many things in order to make sure that you got the point?

A vision

5-10 - "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' But I replied, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' But a second time the voice answered from heaven, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven."

Word from the Holy Spirit

11-12 – "At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. The Spirit told me to go with them."

Confirmation from others

12-14 – "These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.'"

Evidence of the working of God

15-17 – "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?"

Agreement among the followers of Jesus

18 - When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

Psalm: Psalm 148

1 - Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise God in the heights.

14 - Hallelujah! (*Psalm 146-150 all begin and end with Hallelujah*)

On Palm Sunday (Luke 19: 40) Jesus said that if His people do not praise Him, the rocks will cry out.

Can you even imagine what it would be like to have all of the following join in praising God?

Angels and hosts of heaven (2); sun, moon, shining stars (3); waters above the heavens (4)

Sea monsters and all deeps (7); fire, hail, snow, fog, and tempestuous wind (8)

Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars (9)

Wild beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds (10)

Sovereigns of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the world (11)

Young men and maidens, old and young together (12)

Why should we praise the Lord?

5 - He commanded, and they were created.

6 - He made them stand fast forever.

13 - His splendor is over earth and heaven.

14 - He has raised up strength for His people and is near to us.

Second Reading: Revelation 21:1-6

In the resurrection of Jesus the new age has dawned; God dwells with us already. Yet we wait for the time when the tears that cloud our vision will be wiped away. Then we will see the new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem.

The Second Readings during the Easter season all contain visions of heaven - intended to strengthen the people of God - "Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow."

What elements in today's Second Reading most strengthen you for the challenges of life?

1 - I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

2 - I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 - I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them."

4 - "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more."

5 - The one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new."

6 - "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life."