

Homily  
April 14, 2024  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter  
27:10 – 35:20

You know, sometimes pastors live in a small world. And yesterday as we were preparing the beginning of the First Holy Eucharist Retreat, I was informed that yesterday was opening day for Little League in many places throughout the city. When the celebrating that they had on opening day concluded, I can just hear what the coaches roared at their players were saying, “Get the basics! They are essential.” And then they look at the kids and go, “Well, maybe I just need to tell you, “Go do it!”

What are the essentials? Fielding the ball - get the mitt down to the ground, grip the ball at the seams, track the ball in the air and get under it, what’s the best way to throw it in – to which position, how are you going to swing your bat, and how are you going to run the bases? Those are the basics. I only know them because I watch baseball with my brother sometimes. Because you see, I spent my time in Right Field. (Laughter) Do you all know what that means? Nothing came out there and if it did, it was like (Father watches an imaginary ball fly overhead).

So let’s get the basics. That’s a familiar mantra in many parts of our lives. Not just in baseball. And to get through the basics requires: naming them, discerning them, focusing upon them and practicing them.

Our Scripture readings today provide, my brothers and sisters, examples for us to get the basics of Christianity: creeds, moral principles and the sacraments.

In the Acts of the Apostles we hear Peter’s speech today. It’s similar to other speeches throughout the Acts of the Apostles. It contains the *kerygma*. In Greek it basically means “the basics,” the basics of the Christian faith.

If you lay all of those speeches throughout the Acts of the Apostles one next to each other, you could form an outline of what their content is.

- And it goes like this:
1. Jesus is the fulfillment of Israel’s Scriptures
  2. Jesus’ death in Salvation History is decisively significant
  3. Jesus’ Resurrection and exaltation are miraculous
  4. Jesus’ hearers need to repent
  5. There is the possibility of the forgiveness of sins
  6. Jesus will and does send the gift of the Holy Spirit
- And finally,
7. There is hope in the promise of the Second Coming of the Lord

You know, our ancient credal formulas like the Nicene Creed, which we will pray together in a few moments, or the Apostles’ Creed, are an expanded, or more theologically precise, version of these speeches that are found in Acts.

These seven elements outlined just now are the basics from our earliest Faith Ancestors in Christ.

First John is a wonderful letter, written to a lady to underscore some very basic parts of how a Christian is to live. And here today, our reading talks about the basic moral advice for Christians:

1. Avoid sin
2. Keep the Commandments

Now, the calling to avoid sin is quickly followed in our reading by a reminder that Christ's death on the Cross was an effective sacrificial offering for our sins and the sins of the whole world. And then secondly, the Commandments noted in our reading are probably not the 613 precepts of the Mosaic Hebrew Covenant. Nor are they even the Ten Commandments.

This is First John. And so the reference here is probably to the two basic Commandments of Jesus that we hear in John's Gospel account. And they are:

1. Believe in Jesus as the revealer of God and in his Heavenly Father
2. And love God and one another, as I have loved you

These are the most basic moral teachings of Christianity as presented by John the Evangelist. What we do and say as believers flow from them. And we who truly do believe in Christ will do everything to avoid sin and will love God and one another as he continues to love us.

Some have said that Jesus "ate his way" through the Gospel of Luke – from meal to feast, from meal to feast. All these meals, though, they point to, prefigure, or call believers to "Eucharist," the Sacrament of ongoing Christian life and spirituality. Whether in the passage of the Road to Emmaus, that precedes our Gospel passage today, or this particular passage today – the most basic of Christian gatherings is the breaking open of the Scripture for understanding and the sharing of the One Bread and One Cup, that is the Eucharist.

My brothers and sisters, our readings today open to us the most basic elements of Christian Life revealed to us in the Scriptures: Creed, moral principles and the central sacrament of our lives. For you and me, these Scriptures invite and challenge us to gain greater clarity of what we believe, find ways to put our beliefs into loving practice and deepen our faith and love through our contact with our Risen Lord in the Eucharist as we become what we eat.

As the earth blooms, the trees green and as we continue to pass through our Easter Season once again, perhaps we can focus on these basics and be invigorated by them in our daily life.