

## Homily for 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter

All three readings make reference to 'sin' and the need for conversion. Our immediate reaction may well be to think those are themes for Lent, why stress them in the midst of our Easter celebration? But can we understand what has been achieved in the Lord's Paschal Mystery without taking account of the reality of sin. It is the abuse of human freedom that has made the destructive world from which we need to be saved and set free. The words of Peter in the first reading suggest a line of thought which has relevance for the world in which we live. Quite rightly, our discussion of 'sin' usually stresses what is done with full and wilful responsibility. Peter points to another form of 'sin' when he acknowledges that the perpetrators of the terrible miscarriage of justice that has 'killed the prince of life' did not fully understand what they were doing. In today's world of confused moral values, who is to judge the moral guilt of many things that are done? But if what is done is a turning away from the light to darkness, from what leads to life to what leads to death, it is sinful in the sense that it is an aberration that has destructive consequences from which only God can save us.

Our mission - as those who have found Resurrection faith and the hope it brings - is to bring liberation from sinfulness in all its forms, by sharing the light and life of the Risen Lord with our struggling world. Every encounter that Jesus had with persons after the Resurrection was a "mission-meeting". Jesus did not tell His little show-and-tell congregation to relax, talk things over and then see what's going to turn up next. As with any experience of intimacy, with God or with other humans, there will be implications. Intimacy invites us into mystery, into adventure, into deeper experiences of life. Jesus invites His intimate friends to go out and be intimate within all nations. The world simply cannot deal with that kind of expectations. Without the Easter faith not only death but life itself is ultimately meaningless. There is no value for life that ends beside a grave. The Gospel passage stresses the reality of the resurrection. The risen Lord was not a phantom or hallucination, but he became a reality experienced by his disciples. Often the reality is that our faith remains in words and does not penetrate into our lives.

*There is a story that well depicts our attitude. The priest ("poojary") of a small Hindu congregation in a tribal area in India was being proselytized by some energetic Christian missionaries. He listened for a while and then said to them: "Gentlemen, look. I have a proposal that will settle this. I have here a glass of nux vomica, a poison which I use to kill rats. If you drink this poison and remain alive as your God Jesus Christ promised, I will join your religion – and not only myself, but my entire Hindu congregation. But if you won't drink the poison, well, then, I can only conclude that you are false ministers of the gospel you preach because you do not trust that your Lord would not let you perish." This created a problem for the missionaries. They conferred with each other and said, "What on earth are we going to do?" Finally, they arrived at a plan of action. They came back, approached the Hindu priest and said, "Here is our plan. You drink the poison, and we'll raise you from the dead by the power of Jesus!" The theme of today's readings is the challenge to adjust our lives in the living presence of the risen Lord. This awareness should strengthen our hope in his promises. That was the experience that the Apostles had in the upper room where they were gathered. This experience transformed the Apostles. They were no longer weak and timid men; but they became men of courage who declared the reality of the resurrection of Jesus through their preaching and healing ministry. Our daily lives should be the means of experiencing and sharing the risen Lord with others. Just as the disciples experienced the risen Lord in their community we should be able to feel the presence of Jesus in our own homes, our parish and our community.*