

Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 20:1-9; (R1) Acts 10:34, 37-43; (R2) Colossians 3:1.

One of the liturgical characteristics of the Easter Season is the reading of Acts. The first reading presents the life of the early Church. It is one of five similar sermons in Acts which offers an early summary of the first apostolic preaching. Luke stylizes the preaching and has Peter speak to the people about Jesus and His mission: His baptism, preaching, deeds, His death and resurrection. Luke insists that the apostles have been eyewitnesses to all they are preaching.

The Responsorial Psalm is a thanksgiving song for Israel's king as he returns victorious from battle. In the liturgy it celebrates the victory of the risen Jesus over sin and death.

In the Second Reading, Paul tells that Jesus in His risen life lives a new life, and so must all of us raised to new life in baptism — "be intent on things above rather than on things on earth."

The empty tomb! The awe, the wonder, as John and Peter "looked at each other with a wild surmise — silent."

The gospel is restrained and factual,

almost austere in its bold statement of the experience which led up to the faith of the apostles and the first witnesses of the resurrection. They did not yet understand as they would when the Holy Spirit would be poured out on them. But at last they remembered the words of Jesus, and believed.

The symbolic value of the events is subtly stressed. Mary Magdalene is the type of the witnessing Christian. She hurries to tell others of the empty tomb and returns to search still for Jesus and worship Him when found. So we too must go and tell others quickly about the wonder of salvation that Jesus is risen and is still with us, and then worship Him as Lord in the Eucharist.

Also the primacy of Peter is shown in John's deference to Peter. Then the "first day" has overtones of the new creation, of the light overcoming the darkness. Baptism is for Christians their new creation; and on this first day of the week — Easter Sunday — they celebrate their new life by the renewal of their baptismal promises. This renewal is the central piece of the Liturgy of the Word, much as baptism is the focal point of the Vigil Liturgy.



A Word for Sunday Father Albert Shamon

Our baptismal promises consist of rejecting Satan and all his works. The works of Satan are the very opposite of the works of God. God is love; Satan is hate. God is the source of unity as on Pentecost; Satan is the cause of disunity as at Babel. So the works of Satan are all those against love, all works that divide people, that cause quarreling, dissension, discord, division, divorce. How right the Greeks were when they named their god of the underworld "Dis" — because they saw the devil as the father of all dissension and discord.

We reject the works of Satan, because we believe God is a trinity of persons — a community of loving persons: an almighty Father, an only Son, and a Holy Spirit of Love, making them one.

Every time we sow seeds of dissension and discord, we are doing the works of Satan. Every time we spread love,

kindness and happiness, we are rejecting Satan and doing the works of God. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace.

Such is the demand of the resurrection of Jesus. To share in the paschal mystery means that a change be made in us as radical as the move from death to new life.

A priest was explaining to a Mohammedan what Easter meant. It meant that after Jesus died, He came back to life again.

But the Mohammedan questioned, "Why would he come back to this old life again, with all its sufferings, pains and divisions?"

"Ah," answered the priest, "He came back to a new life — not to the same old life."

So Easter must be for us a true resurrection: a rebirth to a new life of love and joy.



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baptismal font, communion table, chairs and a bench built into the front sanctuary wall, all of lustrous black ash.

"How much of his grief went into the design of this church, how much of his finding himself again, no one will ever know," said Mrs. DeZafra. "But it is a thing of beauty."

Although the last stop was the soaring Gothic First Presbyterian Church, which now houses the congregation of the Rev. Franklin Florence's Central Church of Christ, the layover was too long for those of us who had prior commitments. Still, the leaded glass doors, timber trusses, majestic vaulted ceilings, and vine-covered exterior looked inviting, and the church is considered to be Andrew J. Warner's best ecclesiastical design.

Some of us may return again to Our Lady of Victory, the charming "Little French Church" erected in 1868 under the direction of Belgian Father Hippolyte DeRegge. Father Alphonse Notebaert, a popular pastor who held the pulpit from 1895 to 1928 and advocated the creation of parks along the Genesee River, established the lush side lawn and flower garden on the church's east side, which still bloom today in profusion

throughout the spring and summer, "an oasis of beauty in the heart of the city," as the program notes proclaim.

Father James J. King pointed out for tour members the numerous statues and paintings that lined the church's interior — Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St. Jude, St. Anthony, Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Infant of Prague and St. Theresa, the Little Flower. Banks of electric candles stood in place of the traditional vigil lights that once filled this sanctuary, as well as the one at St. Joseph's, which burned down in 1974 when a candle fell down behind the altar and ignited a curtain. Afterwards, Bishop Kearney asked the Redemptorist Fathers to move in and staff the combined parish of Our Lady of Victory/St. Joseph's Church.

"The church, even though it is old and very precious, and has the blessing of the

Landmark Society, is a very functional church," Father King noted. "It is very much in use. We can probably estimate conservatively that about 250 people each day come to this church, or any of the four daily services we hold. That's excluding those who stop by at some time during the day." Our Lady of Victory is one of the few downtown churches that remains open all day long, "about 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. each day."

Father King's closing words to his late Sunday visitors nearly captured the aura of "ineffable space" that pervaded this gently tapering afternoon. "So many people thank us for this small privilege of coming to a downtown place, away from the noise and the bustle, and just being able to sit down and talk to God," he concluded. "It is a downtown sanctuary."

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