

***Fourth Sunday of Easter***  
***May 3, 2020***

*“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, “What are we to do, my brothers?” (Acts 2:37)*

Our first reading, taken from the second chapter of The Acts of the Apostles, beautifully illustrates the powerful effect the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ can have in the lives of people. Both the citizens of and visitors to Jerusalem had just listened to the first proclamation of the Gospel by an apostle. What may fascinate us is the reaction of the listeners. Unlike people of later generations, they do not brush off this message as dust upon shoes. Nor does Saint Luke record them planning what they intended to do next. He only presents them as being willing to listen. It is that willingness which allows the Holy Spirit to move their hearts. Peter further encourages them toward repentance. For this to occur, two things must happen within each of the listeners that day. They must have a change of mind which leads to a change of heart.

A Change of Mind: For most individuals, the ability to learn new things and formulate new ideas can be both a trying and rewarding endeavor. This ability can often become hindered when we choose to halt this most natural process. A simple way to achieve this failure is to imagine ourselves as experts of all subjects. We can easily point these individuals out of a crowd because 99.99% of the time they stare back at us when we look into a mirror. I apologize if this seems too harsh. Yet, have we not all, at one time or another, brushed aside the suggestions or ideas of another person because we knew what we were talking about? Have we not said, “If only *(insert any person here)* would listen to me, then *(insert any favorable outcome here)*.” For you and I to grow in the spiritual life, we must begin by humbling ourselves, admitting we do not know all that we should. This is extremely important when it concerns ourselves. Few of us actually know why we think and act the way they do. The old saying, “A wise man knows that they do not know,” should be ingrained in our minds. For the Holy Spirit to begin leading us to repentance, we must first courageously admit that we do not know the way. Only then, turning our minds over to His guidance, can we begin to address those issues in our lives which are preventing us from giving ourselves completely to the Will of God.

A Change of Heart: It is never enough to just know what we have done. Our knowledge must lead toward an action. It is the action which will determine how we will advance in our spiritual lives. We must all face that moment when the realization occurs that a certain behavior is not good for us, it may in fact be harming us. At that moment we must choose to continue down the destructive path or allow the Holy Spirit to choose another way for us. The best example I can give you would be to imagine yourself in a maze. You know one way leads out toward safety and another leads further into the maze. No one should continue to remain in that same place hoping the maze will just disappear. We must take that first step. Will it be the right step? Only time will tell, but we can be assured that when we do take that step, God will be with us. For true repentance to occur, we must be willing to take a step away from a sinful thought or behavior and toward something different.

The Gospel message proclaimed by Saint Peter is still daily proclaimed in our churches. It has not lost any of its value or ability to convert. The real question we must ask ourselves today is: “Are we willing to honestly listen and courageously act in union with His Word?”