

## Easter 2

An old instruction for those giving a talk ran as follows: tell them what you are going to tell them, then tell them, and then tell them that you have told them. So a threefold method. What is the saying? Three times for the normal mind. A person has to hear something three times before it sinks in. Hence this method of giving a talk.

Well, I do not believe that the Gospel of John follows this method. It has a simpler method, a two-step method. It tells you something and then it tells you why it has told you that. Look at the last lines of today's Gospel and you can see this method at work: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may life in his name."

What can we get out of these sentences? They are, by the way, the last sentences of John's Gospel. There is another chapter, ch. 21, but scholars believe it is a latter addition to the original Gospel. Thus in the New American Bible this final chapter is labeled an epilogue. But what can we learn from these sentences? We can

learn first of all that there was more material about the Lord, about what he did and said, than John could include in his Gospel. We can learn that his purpose in presenting the material he chose to include in his Gospel was to make it possible for us, his readers, to come to believe in Jesus as the Christ, as the Son of God. Then we can learn that he believed that this belief would give us life. So he wants to make us believers in Jesus, and he thinks that if we become such we will find life.

Life, life, life. Who does not want to live? Of course we all differ in our views about what life is, about what really being alive is. Look at the different kinds of activities which people engage in, and they do so because they enjoy them and therefore feel alive when engaged in them. Some people ride bikes, motorized or not. Maybe it is the motion that makes them feel alive, and the fact that the views change. Some people collect antiques. Some people go to sporting events. Some people play sports or cards. And so on. But people do all these things because they feel alive when doing them.

Of course we all recognize that it is our good relationships which give us life. You remember how Mother Teresa felt that even in a rich country like ours—or perhaps precisely because of its

richness—many people were unhappy because they were lonely. To have a good spouse, to have children, to have extended family, to have friends—these are the realities that give us life.

But John has a somewhat different view. He feels that the thing that is going to give us life is belief in Jesus as the Messiah, as the Son of God. Why? How? Because to believe in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God is to believe that God is so good and concerned with us that He has sent his own Son to be part of our lives. In other words, to accept Jesus is to believe that God loves us very much, and people who can believe that are happy and alive because they know that God is in their corner. Nothing can disturb them. They can entrust themselves entirely to God's love for them manifested in Jesus and his life among us. Once they have this trust and confidence, they can open their hands to life. We see that in today's first reading. The first disciples, if they had been tight-fisted before, are now generous. They share their lives and their possessions with each other: "The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common." And again: "There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale,

and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need.”

No one today is going to ask us to be so radical as to sell everything we have and give the proceeds to the poor. However, we are asked to keep this model in mind as our ideal. What is extra in our lives should be given away to the poor, whether it is food or clothing or money. If we live that ideal, we are going to be happy. We are going to grow as people.

We have all been shocked by the fact that today there are pirates. I think our first reaction to their behavior would be to say: Shoot them. And it may be the correct response. But did we ever think that these pirates are pirates because they live in a country where there is no effective government and poverty is everywhere. They probably defend their way of life as the only alternative to starvation and death. But there would not be such a situation in their country if the people there—and the people here—took as their model the early Christian community. Then we would live in a world of sharing, and people would no longer be forced to become pirates in order to survive. Which means that if we live as we should live, if we live lives of faith, of trust in God’s love for

us, we will help the world's economy because we will share what we have with others who have less.

May our faith in Jesus as Messiah and Lord grow and bring us alive by leading us to share with others.