

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I recently received my monthly copy of Sports Illustrated. I always look forward to catching up on the latest news in the sports world especially as it relates to baseball scouting reports, team standings, etc. The May edition of SI caught my attention for another reason. The cover reads: “Sorry, Grownups: The Golden Age is Now.” The premise of the author Sam Page is that no previous athletic greats could remotely compete against today’s superstars. Yes, Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio, Bill Russell and Joe Montana would be left in the dust. This is a debate for another day. Page writes that “The term ‘Golden Age’ can describe the best period of something. But it can also mean the original era—a fondly remembered beginning.” You may be rightly asking at this point, “What does this have to do with the Scriptures?” Well, everything!

During the Easter Season, we hear this proclaimed in the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles. Acts reflects the great energy and movement of the Holy Spirit in the early Church. The words of the journalist Sam Page have some resonance with the experience of the early Christian communities. Basking in the glow of Easter morning when we celebrate the triumph of life over death through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we come to know its implications through the stirrings and activity of the first believers. I would submit that Acts reflects a “Golden Age” in Christendom: “the original era—a fondly remembered beginning.” The 1971 edition of The Jerusalem Bible, in its introduction to the Acts of the Apostles, suggests that the motivation of St. Luke in writing this chronicle of the apostolic age was to report on the “spiritual energy inside Christianity that motivates its expansion and (its spiritual doctrines).”

Reflecting upon this “spiritual energy” is essential to understanding that Easter is not simply a day marked in finite time. Hopefully as Christians, Easter becomes a part of the fabric of our very nature, a pervasive attitude by which we view and interact in the various circumstances of life. It is important from time to time to re-read Acts of the Apostles so that we can contemplate and reflect upon how God is operative in this “Golden Age” of human history and the life of the Church. The energy and excitement, congruent with danger and uncertainty, to be sure, of the early Church is instructive and relevant for us today. These aspects can help us to re-energize and re-commit ourselves individually and as a community to the truly dynamic nature of what it means to be a Christian. Paul and Barnabas took seriously the mission that “I have made you a light to the Gentiles, that you may be an instrument of salvation to the ends of the earth.” Their travels from Perga to Pisidian Antioch were geographically treacherous but they kept on. Even against the rebuke of Jewish leaders in Antioch, “they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them, and went to Iconium (and) the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.”

They had come to believe in the triumph of Jesus the Good Shepherd. The early disciples heard the voice of Jesus, knowing that He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life and so wanted to share that Good News with others. In that “Golden Age”, as in ours, there will be rebuke and hardship for speaking the Truth. We need not be afraid. Be steadfast, stouthearted...firm in faith, hope and love.

Fr. Tom