



Sunday 14th April 2024

The Third Sunday of Easter

Gospel Reading

Luke 24:36-48

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

³⁶ While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' ³⁷ They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?' ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate in their presence.

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

Other Readings: Acts 3.12-19

Psalm 4

1 John 3.1-7

Homily

Holy Spirit, would you take my words and speak to each of us according to our need. Amen

You may have heard the old Scottish prayer which says "From ghoulies and ghosties and long-legged beasties and things that go bump in the night. Good Lord deliver us." This isn't a prayer which you hear very often nowadays, but none of us like to be faced with things we can't comprehend. But in today's gospel reading, that is exactly what the disciples were faced with. They were still trying to get their heads around the fact that Jesus has been raised from the dead. Therefore, to then have him stood in front of them, no wonder they were "startled and terrified".

Today's passage comes just after Jesus has appeared to the two on the road to Emmaus, who didn't recognise him until the breaking of the bread. These two had returned to the rest of the disciples and had just told them that they had seen Jesus, so for him to then appear among them, was very startling and frightening, no wonder they thought he was a ghost. So

it appears that Jesus's greeting of "Peace be with you" fell on deaf ears on this occasion, as peace was not what they were feeling at all. But Jesus tries to reassure them by offering them to look at the nail marks on his hands and his feet and also by stating that a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones as he had. Furthermore, he asks for some food in order to confirm that he was physically present with them, and we are told that they gave him some broiled fish. For Jesus it was essential that the disciples were totally certain that he had risen from the dead and was stood with them. Without this certainty once they had received the gift of the Holy Spirit, they would not have been able to preach the gospel with the necessary conviction. This was essential for the faith of all those who were to come after them.

In our reading from the Acts of the Apostles we have Peter, who strengthened by the Pentecostal Spirit, reminding the Jews of how they had disowned Jesus, rejected the Holy and Righteous One, just as he had himself when he denied knowing Jesus three times. Peter has been transformed through his faith and now is confident enough to speak out to the crowds acknowledging their ignorance as to who Jesus was at that time. And preaching "Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out."

This message of repentance is reiterated in the first letter of John who declares that Christ Jesus "is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Isn't this amazing, that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. This makes us children of God, as believers in the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, we are not just his friends, we are members of his family, we belong. This means that Jesus is risen and among us now. If we have accepted him as our Lord and Saviour he walks with us through our daily lives, he lives in our hearts and speaks through our words, sees with our eyes and reaches out to others through the touch of our hands. People talk about how short Jesus's ministry was, just three years, but it is extended through us and all that we do to share God's love, and Jesus's life, with everyone we meet.

For me, the fact that people may see Christ through me is awesome, that the love and kindness I show comes from Jesus and from me being a child of God. We all have a part to play in the ever-growing family of God. Our part is to follow Peter's example of sharing what Jesus has done for us in our own lives. Our part is to invite people to join us as children of God and explain how they can have eternal life through Jesus's death and resurrection.

The Easter story is totally awesome, so let's share it!

Conversation Questions

1. How do you think you would have reacted if you had been one of the disciples?
2. In what ways do you think you can share the easter story this week?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you?
What is it?

4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

Almighty Father,
who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples
with the sight of the risen Lord:
give us such knowledge of his presence with us,
that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life
and serve you continually in righteousness and truth;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

(or)

Risen Christ,
you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope:
strengthen us to proclaim your risen life
and fill us with your peace,
to the glory of God the Father.

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