



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**3rd Sunday of Easter
April 14, 2024**

Theme: “³⁷ But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit.”

Gathering Prayer

All: May your people exult for ever, O God, in renewed youthfulness of spirit, so that, rejoicing now in the restored glory of our adoption, we may look forward in confident hope to the rejoicing of the day of resurrection. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Luke 24:35-48

³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. ³⁶ As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to You.” ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. ³⁸ And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not 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 And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, 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 before them.

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

Gospel Focus

It is reassuring to note that the disciples do not react with immediate joy when they first encounter the risen Christ. Their response instead is to be “startled and terrified.” We, too, do not always react with wholehearted joy when we encounter Jesus. He often comes to us in unexpected ways and asks us for sacrifices we do not want to make. But Jesus’ response is to offer reassurance. He has the disciples look more closely, showing them the wounds he endured on the cross and eating in front of them to reassure them

that he is not the ghost they fear he is. Jesus responds to our hesitation with the same reassurance. He always invites us to come closer, to see more fully, who he is and what he is doing. And when we do, when we finally see him well enough, our response will echo the disciples' amazement and joy.

Gospel Reflection

The gospel today has many resonances with the gospel for the 2nd Sunday of Easter (John 20:19-31). In both accounts, the risen Christ appears to the disciples and stands "in their midst." In both, his first words are "Peace be with you," and then he shows them his hands, feet and side. In both accounts the disciples move from terror to joy. Both stories end with a sending of the disciples in mission.

Despite the many similarities, the theological emphasis in the two accounts are quite different. Luke's focus is on the identity of the risen Christ and his reality and tangibility. Unlike the story of Thomas in John's Gospel, which focuses on believing, in the Gospel of Luke, the reason for the disciples seeing and touching Jesus' hands and feet is to convince them that the Risen One is the same Jesus who was crucified, and who still bears the marks of this on his body, though he is real and alive. Jesus is not just a memory that lives on, not is he a haunting ghost; instead he is truly alive and tangible. Unlike the preceding Emmaus scene, where Jesus eating with the two disciples is revelatory and eucharistic, in today's gospel Jesus eating serves as a proof that he is truly alive and tangible in bodily form.

In the second half of Luke's gospel, the focus shifts to the mission of the disciples to be witnesses to the suffering Messiah who is raised. Key to being a witness is the understanding of the Scriptures, as well as repentance and forgiveness of sins. These same emphases are echoed in the first reading, Peter's speech is set in Solomon's portico in the temple; it follows his healing of a man who was crippled and begged daily at the "Beautiful Gate." Peter harshly accuse his fellow Jews, placing on them all the blame for handing Jesus and putting to death the "author of life." But the gospel writers' focus is not on fixing blame for the death of Jesus, rather, the focus is on God's power in raising Jesus.

Peter excuses all those who were complicit in Jesus' death, saying that they acted out of ignorance. This is similar to what the Lukan Jesus does as he prays from the cross, "Father forgive them; they know not what they are do" (23:34). Luke consistently portrays Jesus as a rejected prophet and explains his death as fulfillment of Scripture. The notion of a suffering Messiah, found in the first reading, and the gospel, is one that occurs only in Lukan writings (Luke 24: 26, 46; Acts 3:18; 17:3, 26: 23); it is not found in any Old Testament texts.

Immediately linked to the affirmation that the Messiah must suffer is the invitation to repentance and forgiveness. Repentance and acceptance of forgiveness are not guilt-induced; it is the only adequate response to God's gift of new life offered in restored relationship with the risen Christ. Witnessing to this love and power begins at home (Jerusalem), and then radiates out "to all nations."

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

¹³ The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴ But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ...

¹⁷ "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸ But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he

thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm — Ps 4:2, 4, 7-8, 9

(R): Lord, let your face shine on us.

When I call, answer me, O my just God, you who relieve me when I am in distress; have pity on me, and hear my prayer! ***(R)***

Know that the Lord does wonders for his faithful one; the Lord will hear me when I call upon him. ***(R)***

O Lord, let the light of your countenance shine upon us! You put gladness into my heart. ***(R)***

As soon as I lie down, I fall peacefully asleep, for you alone, O Lord, bring security to my dwelling. ***(R)***

Second Reading — 1 John 2:1-5

¹ My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ² and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. ³ And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ He who says "I know him" but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵ but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

601. The Scriptures had foretold this divine plan of salvation through the putting to death of "the righteous one, my Servant" as a mystery of universal redemption, that is, as the ransom that would free men from the slavery of sin. (Is 53:11; cf. 53:12; Jn 8 34-36; Acts 3:14) Citing a confession of faith that he himself had "received", St. Paul professes that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures." (1 Cor 15:3; cf. also Acts 3:18; 7:52; 13:29; 26:22-23) In particular Jesus' redemptive death fulfills Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering Servant. (Cf. Is 53:7-8 and Acts 8:32-35) Indeed Jesus himself explained the meaning of his life and death in the light of God's suffering Servant. (Cf. Mt 20:28) After his Resurrection he gave this interpretation of the Scriptures to the disciples at Emmaus, and then to the apostles. (Cf. Lk 24:25-27, 44-45)

645. By means of touch and the sharing of a meal, the risen Jesus establishes direct contact with his disciples. He invites them in this way to recognize that he is not a ghost and above all to verify that the risen body in which he appears to them is the same body that had been tortured and crucified, for it still bears the traces of his Passion. (Cf. Lk 24:30,39-40, 41-43; Jn 20:20, 27; 21:9,13-15) Yet at the same time this authentic, real body possesses the new properties of a glorious body: not limited by space and time but able to be present how and when he wills; for Christ's humanity can no longer be confined to earth, and belongs henceforth only to the Father's divine realm. (Cf. Mt 28:9, 16-17; Lk 24:15, 36; Jn 20:14, 17, 19, 26; 21:4) For this reason too the risen Jesus enjoys the sovereign freedom of appearing as he wishes: in the guise of a

gardener or in other forms familiar to his disciples, precisely to awaken their faith.(Cf. Mk 16:12; Jn 20:14-16; 21:4, 7)

702. From the beginning until "the fullness of time,"(Gal 4:4) the joint mission of the Father's Word and Spirit remains *hidden*, but it is at work. God's Spirit prepares for the time of the Messiah. Neither is fully revealed but both are already promised, to be watched for and welcomed at their manifestation. So, for this reason, when the Church reads the Old Testament, she searches there for what the Spirit, "who has spoken through the prophets," wants to tell us about Christ.(Cf. 2 Cor 3:14; Jn 5:39, 46)

By "prophets" the faith of the Church here understands all whom the Holy Spirit inspired in the composition of the sacred books, both of the Old and the New Testaments. Jewish tradition distinguishes first the Law (the five first books or Pentateuch), then the Prophets (our historical and prophetic books) and finally the Writings (especially the wisdom literature, in particular the Psalms).(Cf. Lk 24:44)

1304. Like Baptism which it completes, Confirmation is given only once, for it too imprints on the soul an *indelible spiritual mark*, the "character," which is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of his Spirit by clothing him with power from on high so that he may be his witness.(Cf. Council Of Trent (1547): DS 1609; Lk 24:48-49)

Sharing and Discussion

1. Imagine yourself amidst the disciples when Jesus appears. What would your reaction be to see the one you saw die on the cross and then buried?
2. What are your encounters with Christ like in your own life? Where is his presence clear? What helped you to "see" him clearer?
3. What made you an effective witness of Jesus Christ?

Closing Prayer

All: Loving God, you call us to be people of peace who live out the lessons of Scripture in our words and actions. Receive our prayers that strengthened by Jesus we might be witnesses of his glory to all nations. We ask this through Christ our risen Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen