

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Luke 24:32

R/. Alleluia, alleluia.

Lord Jesus, open the Scriptures to us;
make our hearts burn while you speak to us.

R/. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Luke 24:35-48; L47B

The two disciples recounted what had taken
place on the way,
and how Jesus was made known to them
in the breaking of bread.

While they were still speaking about this,
he stood in their midst and said to them,
"Peace be with you."

But they were startled and terrified
and thought that they were seeing a ghost.
Then he said to them, "Why are you troubled?
And why do questions arise in your hearts?
Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I
myself.

Touch me and see, because a ghost does not
have flesh and bones
as you can see I have."

And as he said this,
he showed them his hands and his feet.

While they were still incredulous for joy
and were amazed,
he asked them, "Have you anything here
to eat?"

They gave him a piece of baked fish;
he took it and ate it in front of them.

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
and in the prophets and psalms must be
fulfilled."

Then he opened their minds to understand
the Scriptures.

And he said to them,
"Thus it is written that the Christ would
suffer
and rise from the dead on the third day
and that repentance, for the forgiveness
of sins,
would be preached in his name
to all the nations, beginning from
Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things."

Reflecting on the Gospel

The student teacher was eager to receive some comments after his first experience in the classroom. The mentor offered a gentle critique: "When some students don't understand the lesson, it isn't enough simply to repeat it more loudly." But the student teacher's experience can be our own many times. My explanation was so good! They'll understand it if I repeat it again . . . But instead of repeating something over and over, more loudly each time, it might be

good to try another example or another explanation instead. Or it might be worth the effort to appeal to a different style of learner. Perhaps the first approach to the lesson appealed to the visual learners. The second could be pitched to the auditory learners.

Now that we are in the third week of Easter, we hear yet another story of a resurrection appearance of Jesus. There are a number of different Easter stories that appeal to us on a variety of levels. Initially, the story was the finding of the empty tomb. Then, we had a story of the appearance of Jesus to the disciples without Thomas, followed by one with Thomas. Thomas says

he will not believe unless he probes the nail marks. Now we have another story where the risen Jesus eats a meal. He is said to have flesh and bones. He is not a ghost. His eating baked fish virtually confirms that.

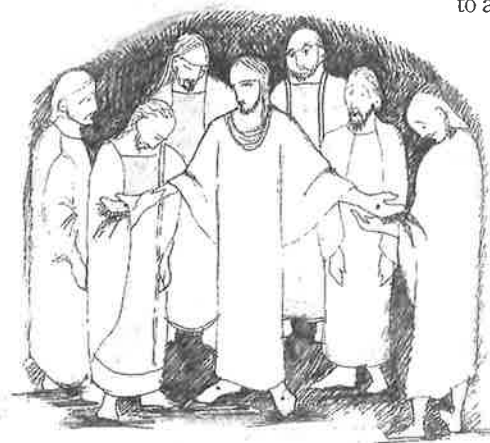
If we didn't understand with the empty tomb, if we didn't understand when Jesus appeared to even Thomas, now there is another appearance where he graphically demonstrates that he is present amongst them. Of course, each of the three stories we are referring to are from different gospel writers: the empty tomb (Mark), the appearance to Thomas (John), and now the risen Jesus eating fish (Luke). But these texts are given to us on successive Sundays to confirm for us that Jesus truly rose from the dead.

Moreover, today's gospel passage begins with a line that should not be neglected: the disciples recounted "how Jesus was made known to them / in the breaking of bread." Of course, the Emmaus story precedes this in the Gospel of Luke. And Luke is telling his audience that the "breaking of bread" is the way Jesus is made known to the community. No longer is Jesus appearing to his assembled followers. That ended with the ascension. Instead, the community will now come together and experience Christ in the breaking of bread, or in what we call Eucharist.

So in addition to the empty tomb, and the appearances, this is yet another way this resurrected Lord is made known to us. By hearing a variety of different stories, we might, like the disciples, come gradually to accepting the risen Christ.

Living the Paschal Mystery

Each time we celebrate the Eucharist, the risen Christ is made known to us as he was made known to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. We may wish for a resurrection appearance where Jesus would eat baked fish, but those appearances are complete. After the ascension, the primary way we come to know him is through the breaking of bread. The risen Lord is flesh and bones, a true



human being, raised to new life by the power of God. We participate in that new life by consuming the bread broken and shared. The breaking symbolizes the death. And the sharing symbolizes the community united in the one loaf. The bread is nourishment and life-giving, as is Jesus himself. It is no wonder that the early Christians, like us, find Jesus made known in the breaking of bread.

Focusing the Gospel

Luke 24:35-48

Today's gospel is the conclusion of Luke's account of Jesus' first post-resurrection appearance to his disciples. The two disciples who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus have returned to Jerusalem to confirm the women's story of the resurrection. As they are excitedly telling what happened, Jesus appears.

Luke goes to great lengths in his Easter accounts to make clear that the resurrection was neither the fantasy of crazy zealots nor a plot concocted by the disciples who somehow managed to spirit the body of Jesus away (according to Luke's account, the disciples had not gone near the tomb themselves; they had not even imagined any kind of "resurrection"). In the details he presents here, Luke is countering the arguments forwarded to explain away the resurrection account. There can be no mistake: The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a reality, a reality in which all of the Scriptures find their ultimate fulfillment. What the disciples see is not a ghost but the physical presence of Jesus risen from the dead. Christ is present with us, and he is present with God in glory.

For Luke, the power of Jesus' resurrection is realized in the way it "opens" one's heart and mind to understanding the deeper meaning of God's word and to fully embracing the Spirit of God. In our faith and trust in the risen Christ, we become "witnesses" of the mercy and forgiveness of God.

Focusing the First Reading

Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

Invoking the name of Jesus, Peter and John have just cured a crippled man at the gate of the temple. The man's jumping about on his newly restored limbs and his loud praising of God has drawn a crowd. Today's first reading is Peter's address to those who have gathered. Peter's sermon is a stinging indictment of the Jewish establishment that plotted Jesus' death, making specific mention of how the priests and scribes deceived them in demanding the release of the murderer Barabbas instead of the innocent Jesus (Luke 23:18-25). But Peter goes on to proclaim the mercy and forgiveness of God, inviting his hearers to embrace the life of the Servant Jesus, in whom the promises of their ancient faith are fulfilled.

Focusing the Responsorial Psalm

Ps 4:2, 4, 7-8, 9 (7a)

Psalm 4 is an evening meditation, a prayer before retiring for the night. The psalmist ends his day by giving thanks for the "wonders" of the day past and placing his trust in the mercy of God to forgive his failings and ease his anxieties as he retires.

Focusing the Second Reading

1 John 2:1-5a

The writer of the First Letter of John proclaims the mercy and forgiveness of God, reminding his community that in Jesus Christ we have an "Advocate" before God. To "know" Jesus (and not just know about Jesus) is to "keep his commandments," chief among which is to "love one another." It is no more complicated than that.

PROMPTS FOR HOMILISTS, CATECHISTS, AND RCIA TEAMS

When have you witnessed love that persevered in the most difficult and trying circumstances—and, in the end, that perseverance was rewarded?

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What have you learned from your own experiences of suffering and despair?

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Have you known someone who has been able to transform the suffering and injustice they encountered into hope and justice for others?

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When was the last time you confronted your own "ignorance" about something or someone?

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