

April 14, 2024
3rd Sunday of Easter
Luke 24:35-48

Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the 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 Messiah 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."

Background:

Last week's Gospel was taken from John's account of Jesus' appearance to the disciples after the resurrection. In that Gospel, Jesus appeared to the disciples twice. The first time, Thomas was not present. The second time, Thomas was present with the others.

This Gospel text from Luke is not from John nor Mark's Gospel. Because Mark's Gospel is the shortest, the Church draws on Luke's text from time to time during year B of the cycle, which is primarily Mark. The Emmaus story from Luke is read on the third Sunday of Easter during year A of the cycle. Today's Gospel text completes the Emmaus story. (Luke 24:13-32). In the Emmaus story Luke states that the two disciples encountered Jesus on "that very day" that the women, Peter, and the beloved disciple had been to the tomb and found it empty. The first line in today's Gospel refers to those two disciples telling the others of their experience of Jesus on the road and in the breaking of the bread.

Here Jesus greets them with the customary greeting of the day, "Peace be with you." They are startled and terrified, even thinking that Jesus might be a ghost. Jesus first tries to assure them that he is a real flesh-and-blood person by inviting them to touch him, and then by eating fish. Having reassured them of his corporal reality, Jesus reassures them that he is truly the promised one. He refers to passages in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms that point to his suffering and death. Their minds are opened to the profound meaning of their religious tradition. Luke does not tell the reader which passages Jesus referred to that day. Again, Jesus greets them with "Peace be with you." His reaction to their fear and lack of faith is to demonstrate his physical presence and show them that he is the same person who was betrayed, condemned, and crucified. He also reminds them of his instructions to them. Jesus also makes clear to them that they are to be his witnesses. This commission to witness has been fulfilled already by the fact that two of them had returned from Emmaus with the news of what had taken place.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do recall experiencing a time when your emotions seemed contradictory or even all over the place? (Perhaps a time of transition for yourself or a close companion, taking an initial step toward dealing with a major issue or addiction, etc.)
2. How does having questions or being troubled affect your relationship with those close to you? Is that also true for your relationship with God?
3. Can you recall any scripture passages where people are in transition in their life or relationship with God?

4. The disciples have witnessed the crowds greeting Jesus as he entered Jerusalem, his rejection by their religious and civil leaders, their own betrayal, Jesus' public death on the cross, and his burial. What are some of the things that they might be feeling at this point in their lives?
5. What are some of the things the disciples might be discovering about their relationship to Jesus during this period?
6. Are there things that you have discovered about your faith in those difficult times of faith in your own life?
7. At the end of the Gospel text, Jesus tells them "you are witnesses of these things." How do you respond to these words of Jesus?
8. Can you take some time today to talk with God about this Gospel text, Jesus' desire to show the disciples that he is real, his statement that they are his witnesses, or some other aspect of your relationship with God that arises from this text?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fsc-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for April 14, 2024, the Third Sunday of Easter

Peter said to the people: "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and denied in Pilate's presence when he had decided to release him. You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. The author of life you put to death, but God raised him from the dead; of this we are witnesses. Now I know, brothers, that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did; but God has thus brought to fulfillment what he had announced beforehand through the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer. Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away."

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!
Know that the Lord does wonders for his faithful one; the Lord will hear me when I call upon him.
O Lord, let the light of your countenance shine upon us! You put gladness into my heart.
As soon as I lie down, I fall peacefully asleep, for you alone, O Lord, bring security to my dwelling.

My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin.
But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one.
He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world.

The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments. Those who say, "I know him," but do not keep his commandments are liars, and the truth is not in them. But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him.

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, "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, "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."

Excerpts from Acts 3:13-15, 17-19; Psalm 4:2, 4, 7-9; 1 John 2:1-5; and Luke 24:35-48

Friends,

Here are the gospel background and reflection questions for April 14th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. On this Third Sunday of Easter, the gospel is from Luke, picking up just after the disciples who had met Jesus on the road to Emmaus had now returned to the other assembled disciples in the room in Jerusalem. The two disciples recounted that they had seen Jesus, and that he was made known to them in the breaking of bread. While they were speaking, Jesus came into their midst and said, "Peace be with you," and he showed them his wounds. Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and he said, "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."

The other readings also have references to turning from sins, and having them wiped away, interpretation of Scriptures saying that the Christ would suffer, and the glorifying of Jesus. In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Peter says to the people, "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over. God raised him, and has thus brought to fulfillment what he announced beforehand through the prophets, that his Christ would suffer. Be converted, that your sins may be wiped away." Psalm 4 exclaims, "Answer me, my God, who relieves me when I am in distress. The Lord does wonders for his faithful one." In the second reading, from his first letter, John writes, "If anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father. Jesus Christ is expiation for our sins and those of the whole world. The way to know him is to keep his commandments."

Jesus himself drew near. He did this for the assembled disciples, as he had done earlier for the two on the road. He was present among them, he calmed their fears. He did this for them, as he does for us, time after time. He makes himself available to us. He is present among us. He fulfills what was written about him, and he reveals himself to us. He opens our minds to understand the Scriptures. That's the Lord, doing what the Lord does. And, as he said, "You are witnesses of these things."

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!