

ECHOING GOD'S WORD
in
THE CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY
THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER
April 18, 2021

SCRIPTURES:

Acts 3:13-15,17-19	Sermon of Peter about the power of God in Jesus.
1 John 2:1-5	Our sins are removed through the intercession of Jesus.
Luke 24:35-48	The disciples eat with Jesus and touch his body.
Psalms 4:2,4,7-9	When God answers us, we feel peace and gladness.

READ THE SCRIPTURES:

Read the Scriptures carefully in your group beginning with the Gospel. Take a few minutes in silence to hear the Lord speaking to the heart. Remember that the word of God in the Bible is primarily addressed to the Church community. What does God want the community to hear today?

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND:

Luke:

There are always three points to each of Jesus' appearances: 1. The disciples doubt. 2. They recognize him. 3. He assigns them a mission and a ministry. The members of the Christian community today have many hesitations about committing themselves to Jesus Christ. It is often difficult to get to "recognize him" in the everyday events of our lives. Once we come to know Jesus Christ, we, too, will be sent to proclaim the Good News of salvation: that he is the Lord. Surely, it must be because we do not readily recognize Christ and know him deeply that we are not eager to be sent on mission by him. Many Christians do not realize that they have a *mission* from the Lord: to make known the resurrection. The Lord of Life sends each of us to proclaim that God gives life everlasting.

In Greek culture, the reality of human nature resided in the soul. A person was a living soul. The body was at best a burden, at worse an illusion. In Hebrew culture, a person was an individual in a human body. The physical dimension of human nature provided an essential element in the reality of the human person. Jesus demonstrates that he is both real and human. 1. He ate with them. 2. He showed them the wounds of his Passion. 3. He invited them to touch him physically. The Church needs to recover its Jewish heritage of valuing the whole person, *body* and *soul*.

Again, Jesus encounters his disciples in the context of a meal. The Scriptures always provide the power for faith in Jesus' appearances. Here, Jesus refers to the Law, the prophets and the psalms, those three segments of the Hebrew Bible.

In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we, too, are gathered at a meal; the Scriptures are always proclaimed.

Our encounter with Christ has that same reality to it as it did for the disciples that day just before Jesus was taken into the glory of the heavenly realm. There is a banquet prepared for us in

the heavenly realm. Our “meal times” on earth prepare us for the heavenly meal. We cannot gather at the eucharistic meal week after week and still not know that God has given us a pledge, has made a covenant to us that we will be included in the eternal banquet in heaven.

Acts:

One of the key features of the Book of Acts is that it contains a series of sermons given by early Christian preachers: Peter, Paul, Stephen, etc. These sermons communicate the heart and soul of the Christian message: Jesus died and rose again; Jesus is the Suffering Servant, the Holy and Righteous One, the Christ, the Messiah, and the “prophet like Moses.” Jesus continues his ministry now through the apostles. For example, the cure of this man born lame. The Church community hears these sermons and strives to live up to them.

1 John:

Love of God cannot be separated from a faithful keeping of God’s commandments. Christians, once baptized, cannot live with deliberate sinfulness. It is enough that we must live in a world infected with sin. In this world and in the next, Jesus is our advocate, pleading on our behalf that we may not be contaminated by sin. Whatever depends on us, such as keeping God’s commandments, needs to be faithfully lived in the love of God. We cannot live a double life: on the one hand claiming we love God and on the other hand always violating the commandments.

QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the Bible considers a meal an ideal setting for an encounter with the Lord? In what ways were meals important for families and for friendship in ancient times? Is the family meal still an important event in your life? Is the eucharistic Meal still important for you and your faith community?

2. Discuss the importance of the Bible for the faith life of the Christian community. How well do you know the Bible? What is the Lectionary and how does it relate to the Bible? Have you heard that the Lectionary is the Church’s way of reading and proclaiming the word of God? What does that mean?

3. At the end of each celebration of the Eucharist, do you hear the Lord sending you to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel to the ends of the earth? How are you responding to the command? How is your parish or faith sharing group responding to that command? What does it mean to proclaim the Good News to the ends of the earth?

SUGGESTION FOR CHRISTIAN ACTION

Ask your group or family to discuss and to choose one ministry or service that the group or family could do together to promote the cause of the Gospel and of the reign of God.

PRAYER

Lord of the Harvest, send workers to bring in the harvest of faith.
Choose us to do your work in this world.
Send your Holy Spirit to fill us with your wisdom
and your strength. Give us the courage to overcome obstacles and the
perseverance to see out tasks through to conclusion. Give your value to our
efforts and our work. We pray through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

When the Second Vatican Council (1963-1965) restored the ancient process of the catechumenate for the initiation of adults into the Church community, the bishops perhaps did not realize the full implication of their action. They could not have suspected that the whole Church would be led through a conversion experience when local communities become instruments of God's saving power through this process. The Church re-evangelizes itself in the process of evangelizing those who come for initiation. The Church recommits itself to Jesus Christ in response to the word which it proclaims and hears. The Church is reborn at Easter along with the newly baptized.

These new Christians are called neophytes. They are "new beings" in Christ. For the period until the Feast of Pentecost they experience Mystagogia, an "unfolding of the mysteries." Their experience of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist needs to be explored, explained, articulated, and unfolded. They can only know the real meaning of these marvelous events when they begin to live them out in everyday life and in the fellowship of the Church.

Together with the neophytes, the rest of the Church opens its heart to the touch of the Risen Lord and is called to a renewal of life, of faith, and of service. We gather together in prayer like the disciples of Jesus began to gather every Sunday to remember the resurrection of the Lord and to feel his living presence among them.

The creeds of the Church (Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, etc.) all refer to our belief in the resurrection of the body. We proclaim in prayer that we believe, not only that Jesus has been raised from the dead but that we, too, are raised with him.

We know that at the end of time the Lord will gather all the elements of our existence, body and soul, restore us to our human integrity of being, give life to all that has died in us. The bodies of the dead will rise from their graves to be reunited with their souls. That is one way of expressing that God will make us whole again, in a wholeness that can never be destroyed. We are not saying that we know how God will do this but that he will is our faith. Even now, surely, we have been raised to new life; we are alive with the risen life of faith in the Living Lord. We are not dead. There is in us the energy of grace which is the very life of God

See: The Catechism: # 1229

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