

## Homily of Third Sunday of Easter, Year B, 2024

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

Easter Octave begins on Easter Sunday and ends with Divine Mercy Sunday. (The word 'Octave' comes from Greek 'okto' and Latin 'octo' which means eight). Easter Octave means that Easter Sunday is celebrated for eight days. We are, now, in Eastertide until Pentecost Sunday, which means that our focus remains on the events of the resurrection and we pray to become energized by the power of the resurrection. We are encouraged to go with the tide of Easter, not against it.

After Jesus had been crucified, the apostles and some of the disciples gathered together and locked themselves up in a room for fear of the Jewish leaders. The apostles and the disciples heard the news of his resurrection with utter disbelief. According to today's gospel, when Jesus appeared and stood in their midst, "they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost" (Luke 24:37). He spoke to them, ate before them, and "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). 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" (Luke 24:46-48).

Fearful Peter, after Jesus' resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit, was transformed from fear to vigor and bravery. He became a fearless witness of the Good News, as we see in today's first reading. He boldly challenged the people concerning their wrong-doings and for their acting out of ignorance. He invited them, "Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away" (Acts 3:17-19).

St. John echoes the same message of repentance in the second reading, "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" (1 John 2:1-3).

We are buried in tombs by our sins and weaknesses; but we rise to new life by our repentance. St. Peter said to the people, "you acted out of ignorance." A lot of times, we are spiritually blinded by ignorance. Let us thank God for saving us from perishing the many occasions we acted out of ignorance. Is there something we are doing or have been doing out of ignorance? We pray for enlightenment through the power of this Eucharistic celebration and the power of the Risen Lord.

For some reasons, many of us may be frightened and scared as Peter, the apostles, and the disciples were. Like the apostles and the disciples, some of us see ghosts all around us. Jesus asks us the same question he asked his apostles and his disciples, "Why are you troubled?" Jesus says, "Peace be with you!" May we experience the power of Christ's resurrection and be healed from our fears. St. Paul prays for us that the peace of God that surpasses all understanding guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).

Today's gospel concludes with the words, "You are witnesses to these things." St. Peter recalls while addressing the people, "of this we are witnesses." These words are an invitation for us to witness Jesus wherever we find ourselves. We are to let people know Jesus and experience him by our words and actions. Unfortunately, many Catholics are afraid and timid to witness Jesus by words and actions. Some Catholics are unable to witness Jesus due to ignorance. Of course, more disappointing are Catholics whose life style is a betrayal of the faith.

We cannot witness what we do not have. If we are to preach Jesus, either by words or deeds, we must first experience him ourselves. In today's gospel, Jesus spoke to the apostles and "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." May he, also, open our minds so that we can understand and witness "what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands..." (1 John 1:1-4).

In today's gospel, Jesus invites us, "Look at my hands and feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see..." (Luke 24:39). Last week, we read about Thomas, who touched Jesus and was healed of his doubt (John 20:28). The woman who suffered hemorrhages touched Jesus and was healed (Luke 8:44). Mark 6:56 reports, "all who touched even the edge of his cloak were healed." Let us, also, touch and see the goodness of the Lord.

Let us touch him with our desire of him. Let us touch him with our faith. Let us touch him with our prayers. As we touch him and by the power of his resurrection, may we receive spiritual and physical transformation from our sins and weaknesses. May we be transformed from ignorance to enlightenment and from fear to courage. Grant us, O Lord, the spiritual energy to go with the tide of Easter, not against it. Amen.

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