

Homily of Third Sunday of Easter, Year B 2021

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

After Jesus had been crucified, the apostles and some of the disciples gathered together and locked themselves up 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 reading, Jesus appeared and stood in their midst. "But 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). Jesus 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).

Peter had been terrified from the time Jesus was arrested. We know of his three times denial of Jesus because he was afraid. But after Jesus' resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit, he 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-doing 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 of ignorance." A lot of times, we are spiritually blind due to ignorance. Let us thank God for saving us from perishing on many occasions when we acted out of ignorance. We pray for spiritual healing through the power of the Eucharistic celebration and the power of the Risen Lord.

Today's gospel concludes with the words of Jesus, "You are witnesses to these things." St. Peter says in the first reading, "of this we are witnesses." These words are an invitation to us to witness Jesus wherever we find ourselves. We are to let people know Jesus and experience him by our words and actions. Many Catholics are afraid to witness Jesus by word of mouth. St. Paul reminds us that God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but the spirit of power and love and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7).

We cannot give what we do not have. If we are to preach Jesus by word of mouth and by our lives, we must first experience him ourselves. We pray to experience Jesus in the Scriptures as he opens our minds to understand the Scriptures. Then, we can preach like St. John, "what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of life for the life was made visible; we have seen it and testify to . . . What we have seen and heard we proclaim now . . ." (1 John 1:1-4).

Jesus blessed his disciples when he appeared to them: "Peace be with you." "Receive the Holy Spirit." May we receive peace and Spirit of Jesus and be empowered by his peace and Spirit to witness him vigorously, boldly and fearlessly.

In today's gospel reading, Jesus invites us, "Look at my hands and feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see..." (Luke 24:39). Thomas touched Jesus and was healed (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. The psalmist says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the one who takes refuge in him" (Psalm 34:38).

As we touch Jesus in our Eucharistic celebration and our prayers, may we be transformed by the power of his resurrection; and as St. Paul prays, may he "bless us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens" (Ephesians 1:3).
Amen.

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