



CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

April 19, 2015

Third Sunday of Easter

Gospel reading Luke 24:35-48 *[To be read aloud]*

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."

Brief commentary:

The Easter season calls us to recall and reground ourselves in the origins of the Christian faith and church. For this reason the first readings are taken from the book of the Acts of the Apostles, the only New Testament book that explicitly offers memories of the early years, triumphs and struggles, of the Christian communities being founded by the spirited apostles of Jesus Christ. The author of Acts – also the author of 'Luke' – speaks to us through speeches like those of Peter, with the Christian conviction that the crucifixion of Jesus was not the result of random chance, but both the consequence of Jesus' life and message, but especially of God's plan of salvation. In today's speech Peter consoles his listeners who were confronted by their complicity in the crucifixion; and he does so comforting because 'they and their leaders' had "acted out of ignorance." How much suffering by the Jewish people would have been avoided had Christians throughout the centuries paid attention to these words! For the Jewish people are no more collectively guilty of Jesus' death as Americans are collectively guilty of the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. And as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* well states, "all sinners are somehow" connected to his death. The earliest Christian professions attributed the ultimate reason and mystery of Jesus' passion to the inscrutable divine plan, and as central "for the forgiveness of sins" and the redemption of the world: the common New Testament expression (in varying forms), "Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead..." attests to this (Luke 24:48). Today's second reading from the first letter of John calls on all to be honest about sinfulness, which so thoroughly infects our lives, relationships, and corrupts our world; and thus it also tells us about our need of divine expiation, repentance, and new life lived in the light of God's will. Today's gospel reading follows the appearance of Jesus to the disciples of Emmaus, who, after their encounter with the risen Christ on the road and recognizing him "in the breaking of bread," returned to Jerusalem testifying to the first community about what they had experienced. There and then the risen Jesus stood in their midst. Their reaction is described with highly emotionally charged words: startled, terrified, troubled, incredulous for joy, amazed. It is an experience that is both 'terrifying and fascinating' (Rudolf Otto's, *The Idea of the Holy*). Jesus responds to each of their needs: he gives them his peace, he assures them of the reality of the resurrected glorious body, invites them to come near and touch him, reminds them of the divine plan about his death and rising foretold in the scriptures. Jesus finally commissions them to be his witnesses to the world. We too have been visited by the risen Christ and have touched him. His resurrection was a breakthrough for him and for us, and we have experienced him not as a ghostly figure, but as the absolutely alive and absolutely powerful One, our "Advocate" (1 John 2:2) who comes to our encounter, and who calls us to recognize him and touch him particularly in our neighbor in need. We too are "witnesses to these things." We too are anointed to witness with our lives and our words to the saving life-giving power of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, our Lord, to a world in need of living grace that overcomes the corrosiveness of sin and death. Today our Christian sisters and brothers in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Nigeria, and many other places, are sustained and strengthened by the risen One; let *us also* – as his Body – come to their rescue in whatever ways we can *this* Easter and always!

Today's reading offers significant messages:

- Every Easter season Christians everywhere are renewed in our identity and mission, by recalling the beginnings of the Church, founded by the life, passion, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.
- The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a chance-event, but the centerpiece of God's plan of salvation for all humanity. Christians are told throughout the New Testament that the salvation of all sinners is the reason for which Jesus Christ willingly offered himself.
- Christians have been touched by the risen Christ and have touched him. Most especially we are to recognize the risen Christ and touch his wounds in neighbor who is in need.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.

- Do I search the Scriptures to encounter the Word of God and be transformed by it?
- How have I experienced the presence and touch of the risen Lord in my life?
- How am I a witness to others of the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Do I recognize the presence of the crucified and risen Lord in my neighbor?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 422-451, 597-605