

Cycle B 3rd Sunday of Easter

Reading 1, Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

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.”

Responsorial Psalm, Ps 4:2, 4, 7-8, 9

R. (7a) 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!

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

Know that the LORD does wonders for his faithful one; the LORD will hear me when I call upon him.

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

O LORD, let the light of your countenance shine upon us! You put gladness into my heart.

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

As soon as I lie down, I fall peacefully asleep, for you alone, O LORD, bring security to my dwelling.

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

Reading II, 1 Jn 2:1-5a

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.

Gospel, Lk 24:35-48

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.

[9AM & 11AM; I would like to begin my homily by talking with our First Communicants. Children, on this special occasion I want to tell you how St. Augustine helps us understand the mystery of the Eucharist. He often told people about a very special quality of the Holy Eucharistic. You see, the ordinary food we eat, he said, becomes part of us. I am sure you have heard the saying, “you are what you eat.” That’s why healthy foods are so important for us. But the Eucharist, St. Augustine said, is different. It is unique because when we receive the Body of Christ, we become part of Him. We become more Christ-like, more patient and kind, more forgiving and understanding. We still live our ordinary daily lives, but now it is Christ who inspires our attitudes and actions. We begin to see people and events through His eyes...to think like He does. When Jesus was on the earth, He used his own human hands to reach out to bless people. But today when He wants to help people in need, He uses our hands. During the consecration, Jesus says to us “This is my body, given up for you.” Maybe our best response is for us to say, “And this Lord is my body that I give up for you.” Together we are the Body of Christ, the Church, the presence of Jesus in the world...His hands and feet and heart. The Gospel today told us we are witnesses that He is real. When we follow Him, when we receive the Holy Eucharist, He will lead us to love and help each other. It’s what we Christians do.]

In St. Luke’s Gospel today, we find two disciples returning from their journey to Emmaus where they discovered “...*how Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of bread.*” And suddenly, Jesus appeared again, which initially terrified them. They didn’t yet understand. So Jesus dispelled their fears and doubts by telling them to touch Him and by eating with them...things that can be done only by a living human being. He was not a ghost. He was truly the risen Christ living and present among them.

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures so they could believe. And he said to them, “...*You are witnesses of these things.*”

Well we too, are witnesses of these things. The commissioning by Jesus to His disciples, His sending them out as apostles into the world, applies to you and me just as much as it applied to them. We too, are Christ’s followers, His disciples. Since our Baptism and Confirmation we too, are empowered by the Holy Spirit as apostles who are sent. We truly are missionaries of God’s kingdom...we share our faith... people learn when we witness our faith...and then the world changes!

Maybe first we need to understand that Jesus left us the important task of participating in God’s kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven. Children I am not just talking to the adults, I am speaking to you too. Jesus taught us to pray: “...*thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*” I fear that too often we think of coming to church and celebrating Mass only in terms of saving our own souls and getting to heaven. That’s far too self-centered if it stops there. I think it misses the point. We need to remember that God loves us so much that we don’t justify ourselves, He does. We don’t sanctify ourselves, God does. We don’t save ourselves, Jesus does. Being a Catholic is not about me, rather it’s about others...and, it’s about the risen Christ in our lives.

A few years ago I was on my way to a New Evangelization class that I am taking as part of my ongoing education as a Deacon. About 100 yards ahead of me a car suddenly crashed into the median wall, and flipped over several times coming to rest upside down across 3 lanes. All the cars around me quickly slowed down. As I was slowly passing, I looked at the trapped driver and through my closed window I heard him screaming, “Help me! Help me!” Four of us pulled over. I knew it was going to be bad. As I turned on my phone, I saw another man talking with 911....when I reached the car, the driver was standing next to it. “How did you get out of there?” I

asked looking in amazement at the crushed car and then back to the man standing there dazed, but without a scratch. “Don’t worry,” I said, “your car can be replaced, but you can’t be.” Then I asked, “What’s your name?” “Elliott Walker,” he replied. I put my hand on his shoulder saying “Elliott, I can’t stay very long, but know that I will be praying for you today.” When I arrived at class, I was a little shook up. Knowing I witnessed a miracle, I wished I had said more about how blessed by God he was...you know, do a better job “evangelizing”...my teacher and classmates tried to assure me that by merely stopping and talking with him I had shared my faith and God’s love. It took me the rest of that week to understand something else. When I stopped to help and reached out touching Elliot’s shoulder, sharing the compassion and love of God, I too had encountered the risen Christ... Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, I didn’t recognize him right away. It wasn’t about me doing good works...it was about meeting the risen Christ and understanding that He is truly present in our lives...in the Eucharist, yes, our source and summit, but I now know that he can be found where people are in need. In order to embrace the Church’s “New Evangelization” each of us needs to share and meet the risen Christ, not only here at Mass as we reverently hear God’s word and receive His holy body, the Eucharist, but out there where people are struggling in the harsh, sin-filled and secular world....believe me when I say that both Elliot and I met the risen Christ that Saturday.

We come to church and we celebrate Mass in order to receive Christ, true enough. But know that we receive Jesus in communion with others and for others. Then when Mass is over we take what we have received...we go out into the world to share the Good News with everyone we encounter....It would be awesome if it stopped there, but there is even more...we get to meet the risen Christ again and again. We do this to make His kingdom come here on earth. Jesus established His Kingdom 2000 years ago. Today we get to participate making it real, in our own lives and in the lives of

others. We must share the presence of Christ, not only with the people who are here at St. Brendans, but we must share Him with those who are not here... especially, with those who are not here....and then never forget who it is that we encountered.

Jesus Christ our Lord is risen, Alleluia! Let us go in peace repenting, encountering, witnessing....and glorifying the Lord with our lives, Alleluia, Alleluia!