

3rd Sunday Easter
April 14-15, 2018

"Why are you troubled?"

Readings: Acts 3:13-15, 17-19; 1 John 2:1-5; Luke 24: 35-48

From our limited perspective, it is so tempting to look back on these early accounts after the resurrection and think to oneself- "How foolish they must have been!" Here is a man who spent three years with them, they abandoned him at the hour of his death, he rises, and they act as if they had never seen him before. Recall, the Gospel relates that the apostles thought they were seeing a ghost.

"Why are you disturbed? Why do such ideas cross your mind?" With all respect, if that is not an understatement! The disciples heads were spinning. This hit them like a ton of bricks, and they needed time to sort things out. Let us not be too quick to characterize the apostles as dim-witted or stubborn. They are no more described by any of those adjectives than we are, for 2000 years later, we often miss the boat.

"Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have." Christ was reaching out in a tangible way, and all the apostles had to do was to reach out to him, to do their part. How frustrating it must have been- Jesus had every right to be both disappointed and even angry at the slow belief of the apostles. Before we get too haughty, we should ask ourselves if we too have been slow to believe and if so, what blocked us from seeing clearly?

Notice that the Gospel says that Jesus "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." When the apostles failed for lack of faith or lack of understanding, Jesus made the first move.

Simply put, we cannot earn faith. It is exclusively a gift from God. Faith is a loving response on our part to a God who always makes the first move in our spiritual lives.

Pelagius taught that by natural means, such as an austere lifestyle, we could overcome our personal sins. We could merit heaven by a

natural faith without God's supernatural help - that is grace. According to him, the Law of Moses was as effective as the Gospel for salvation. Both St. Augustine and St. Jerome opposed him.¹

What I would not give for that walk with Christ to Emmaus; what I would not give for a seven-mile walk, for a few hours alone with Jesus. Think of all the questions we might ask him. Perhaps that time would be even better spent in silent adoration, simply being in His presence; perhaps words would only get in the way.

We have this opportunity to be in communion with the Lord before every tabernacle in any Church, where the special graces will work in our hearts. God's grace heals, purifies and strengthens; if we but remove the obstacles.

The Catholic faith is disturbing precisely because of what is at stake. Jesus Christ, God incarnate, rose from the dead to save us from sin. As a result, He makes demands upon his followers. We are to take up our crosses and follow him. We cannot remain mere bystanders, even if for a little while, we stand in silence and awe.

We must go outside of ourselves, with confidence and joy, but with utter conviction that His life, death and resurrection has made all the difference in the world.

The realization that someone actually died and rose for you, on account of your sins, this is a feeling that cannot be described in words. So let us not cover over that silence- rather let us dwell within it, and be transformed by it.

¹ Cf. Catholic News Agency article, reprint from *A Catholic Response, Inc.*