

3rd Sunday of Easter (B)  
(Acts 3:13-15. 17-19 / Luke 24:35-48)  
18.04.2021  
The Risen Lord

Dear brothers and sisters,

The Risen Lord is at the heart of our fifty days long celebration of Easter. Who is the Risen Lord? The Risen Lord is Jesus who was born of the Virgin Mary, who lived a hidden life in Nazareth for thirty years, right up until the day when he began to preach the kingdom of God during a short period of ministry lasting three years. The Risen Lord is Jesus whose years of ministry were brought to a close by his passion and death on a Cross. Jesus' passion and death were the seal of his fidelity to the mission confided to Him by God the Father to reveal his love for all people without exception. Jesus suffered his passion and death freely, out of love for his heavenly Father and for us, to set us free from sin and death! We believe that the Father raised Jesus from the dead and that He lives for ever. The fact that the Risen Lord is alive for ever shows us that Jesus' resurrection is completely different to that of Lazarus whose life was restored to him for a limited time.

The Risen Lord is Jesus of Nazareth. But truth be told He is much more than just Jesus of Nazareth. The Risen Lord is also the one through whom the Father created all things and through whom He continues to create everything and everyone. The same Risen Lord will come back at the end of time to recapitulate all things in Himself so as to present all that is with Himself to the Father.

The first thing that could be said is that the Scriptures are not short of displays which illustrate that the Risen Lord is much more than Jesus of Nazareth. Mary of Magdala, for example, did not recognise Jesus in the Risen Lord when He appeared to her -she thought he was the gardener- until He called her by her name: Mary! Or again the two disciples on the road to Emmaus did not recognise Him as Jesus when the Risen Lord joined them as a fellow traveller on the road. The disciples' eyes only recognised Jesus when He broke the bread with them after having explained the whole message of the Scriptures to them.

The second thing we should note is that the Lord's resurrection is not just a spiritual event. It is not only the soul of Jesus that has risen, but also his body. The disciples with a Greek mindset were sceptical of the idea of a bodily resurrection. It is for this reason that today's gospel passage taken from St Luke's gospel (a text which was written for the Greeks) underlines strongly the physical reality of Christ's risen body. The disciples were in a state of alarm and fright at the view of the Risen Lord and thought they were seeing a ghost. But the Risen Lord told them: "Look at my hands and feet" (See the holes of the nails of the crucifixion)... "Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have". And again: "Have you anything here to eat? And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes".

This double dimension of the resurrection of Jesus explains why it was not enough for the disciples to see the Risen Lord in order to recognise in Him Jesus the crucified one victorious

over death; the Risen Lord had to make himself recognisable by word or sign so that the disciples could discern that it was Him and believe Him to have risen from the dead.

All this is important for us today. On the day of His Ascension, the Risen Lord promised to be with us always. He is! But we can meet Him and live with Him without recognising Him. How can we recognise the Risen Lord? Where can we find Him?

In the light of the example of the disciples of Emmaus who recognized the Risen Lord at the breaking of bread, after having heard Him explain to them all that concerned Himself in the Scriptures, it becomes clear that our Sunday Eucharist is the place par excellence where we are invited to recognise and welcome the Risen Christ. When we listen to Scriptures which speak to us about Jesus and when we break the bread, there is no doubt that the Risen Lord is with us... He who used to sit at table with people whom others regarded to be sinners. Our Sunday 'breaking of the bread' sustains our relationship with the Risen Lord week after week, year after year.

We note the first words that the Risen Lord addresses to his disciples are always: "Peace be with you"! This does not mean that life is always rosey. It does not mean a kind of "everyone is handsome, everyone is nice" reality. Life is not like that. Suffering is part of life. Jesus suffered. We suffer. It happens also that we are agitated. It happens as well that we are in a state of alarm and fright. It is in our real life situations that the Risen Lord emerges – often surprising us, always saying to us: "Peace be with you"! Peace be with you because I am always with you, especially in the midst of all your trials. I am with you. You are not alone! I am victorious over sin and death. I come to offer you a share in my victory. The peace of the risen Lord is peace given to us by his compassionate and saving presence.

To recognise the Risen Lord, his disciples needed a word or a sign from Him. Mary of Magdala needed to hear her name pronounced: "Mary". The disciples on the road to Emmaus needed the breaking of bread to identify the mysterious fellow traveller.

Today, we need the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the presence of the Risen Lord within us praying to the Father or by our side under the guise of those who walk the path of life beside us, especially the poor and the needy.

We need the Holy Spirit to help us recognise the active presence of the Risen Lord in the sacraments of the Church.

We need the Holy Spirit to help us recognise the voice of the Risen Lord when we do our personal prayerful reading of the Scriptures, our *Lectio Divina*.

We need the Holy Spirit to help us recognise the presence of the Risen Lord in nature and in the events of the world.

The presence of the Risen Lord is not just a spiritual experience. It is a spiritual experience which takes flesh in our humanity and in the creation. We believe in an incarnate Christ. May the Holy Spirit help us to recognise the presence of the Risen Lord in our lives today!