

FIRST READING: Acts of the Apostles 2:36-41

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles:

On the day of Pentecost, Peter said to the Jewish people, "Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other Apostles, "What are we to do, my brothers?" Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call." He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 33:4-5, 18-19, 20 and 22

***The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.***

Upright is the word of the LORD, and all his works are trustworthy. He loves justice and right; of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full.

***The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.***

See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him, upon those who hope for his kindness, To deliver them from death and preserve them in spite of famine.

***The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.***

Our soul waits for the LORD, who is our help and our shield. May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us who have put our hope in you.

***The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.***

ALLELUIA Psalm 118:24

GOSPEL: John 20:11-18

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to John:

Mary Magdalene stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the Body of Jesus had been. And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken my Lord, and I don't know where they laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" She thought it was the gardener and said to him, "Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni," which means Teacher. Jesus said to her, "Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and then reported what he had told her.

## **Reflection for the Octave of Easter Tuesday**

This is bold action for Peter to take. Luke has told us why. This is the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit had just rushed upon the disciples gathered in the upper room. All the events of Jesus had just fallen into place. Peter could make no choice to conceal the Good News of Jesus; he had to preach and share it. Because of the story we will read in a few weeks, a story we already know, Peter had experienced a rush as of wind and a burning as of fire come upon him. I was confirmed at nine or ten years old. Supposedly I received the same thing. I experienced none of the miraculous event of Pentecost and yet I have preached the same Good News of Jesus my entire adult life, Hmm. It is, after all the same Holy Spirit who works.

I like to ignore the special effects of the scriptures. As much as I enjoy special effects, they can divert attention from the actual message the scriptures intend to impart. The Pentecost experience may have been powerful as a personal experience for Jesus' disciples, but it was never intended to be an exclusive experience. As a deeply personal event in the lives of those who gathered in the upper room, it did not remain behind closed doors for long. They grieved behind those doors in safety after Jesus had died. They rejoiced there when Jesus visited after he rose in his glorified, but still wounded, body. They hid from potential persecution and possible execution. They also experienced the literal inspiration from the breath of God. Jesus breathed upon them gathered together when he appeared to them and on Pentecost the Holy Spirit became the very fabric of their lives. All of this occurred within the room's walls. No walls can contain the Spirit and none did.

Now, and this is the significant part of today's reading from Acts, they had become ready to witness and risk it all for this new faith. They now shared with others what they believed together. They began to express the faith they received. They were successful too. The Spirit is now the fabric of yours and my life. We never experienced the special effects either. God's gift of faith fills us as the Spirit inspires us now. Our miracle of Pentecost is no less potent and has a wonderful and subtle beauty as it has taken root. Jesus blessed us, so long ago, when he said to us, "Happy are they who find faith without seeing me." This is taken from the twentieth verse of John's gospel as translated in the Revised English Bible. Please note that happy and blessed can be translated from the same Greek word.

The Holy Spirit works in us now. I look at this story and see a connection between them and us. Three parishes are in the process of merging to form a new one. All of us leave our comfort and safety place. We, like Peter, risk security for the promise of new life in Jesus. The Holy Spirit now leads us outward and toward other people who do the same thing. Peter and the disciples formed a nascent Church. Their way was never easy. They faced the limits of their humanity. Yet the Spirit worked through, with and in them. Our faith and Church are their results in the Spirit. That same Spirit now works through, with and in us. Into whom can we become?

There are always risks. None of the Apostles survived their generation. They may have died, but the Spirit has continued their mission through the generations and millennia to us. They suffered failures. Their faith started small but grew. They faced persecutions. Not all came to faith with them. Here we are the fruits of their mission and the grace of God. We know who we are but not who we can become. That is by the grace of God and the breath of the Holy Spirit. In God's hands we can trust.

The Gospel's story is touching. Mary of Magdala grieved in tears for her dead and gone teacher. She believed in him. He was the Messiah and Lord. Now he was dead and his body gone. What else could she say, know or do? In whom could she believe or trust? Near despair, she did all she thought she could do. She searched for some one who would know, some place to look, where Jesus could be.

As often as I have read or listened to this story, I have wondered why it was his voice and not Jesus face that she recognized. Did he look so different? Was his face obscured or hidden from her? Weren't his gestures and the way he walked familiar? Or was death so final in her mind and her heart so broken that what seems obvious to us couldn't register in recognition in her? We cannot know. The drama and dialogue is riveting, though. I've known experiences like this once in a while. Sometimes we recognize what we expect and not the unexpected.

Some years ago at a former parish, I was putting things away after having celebrated mass. A man I did not recognize entered the sacristy and interrupted my work. I stopped and looked up. I had no idea who this man was. He spoke again and his identity dawned on me. It was his voice and not his face that I first recognized. I hadn't seen this man in forty years. He was from my first parish as a priest. It's funny how my memory worked. He was older, as was I, but his voice was the same. My wonderment of this event made Mary Magdalene's experience clearer to me.

Mary saw Jesus face to face, but still she had to make a leap of faith. She saw him, did not really see him but heard him and believed. I ask; how have you and I seen, heard and recognized Jesus in our lives? Remember, we believe too. Where can our leap of faith lead? True, we can know Jesus as we gather together in his name and know him as we break bread, what about the rest of our lives. As we make our transformation with our neighbors into a new parish, what leap can we make? Jesus through the Holy Spirit will lead and guide us into new life.

May our wonder of the Easter mystery remain strong.

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