

FIRST READING: Acts 3:11-26

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles:

As the crippled man who had been cured clung to Peter and John, all the people hurried in amazement toward them in the portico called "Solomon's Portico." When Peter saw this, he addressed the people, "You children of Israel, why are you amazed at this, and why do you look so intently at us as if we had made him walk by our own power or piety? 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. And by faith in his name, this man, whom you see and know, his name has made strong, and the faith that comes through it has given him this perfect health, in the presence of all of you. Now I know, brothers and sisters, 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, and that the Lord may grant you times of refreshment and send you the Christ already appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the times of universal restoration of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old. For Moses said: *A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise up for you from among your own kin; to him you shall listen in all that he may say to you. Everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be cut off from the people.* "Moreover, all the prophets who spoke, from Samuel and those afterwards, also announced these days. You are the children of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your ancestors when he said to Abraham, *In your offspring all the families of the earth shall be blessed.* For you first, God raised up his servant and sent him to bless you by turning each of you from your evil ways." The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 8:2ab and 5, 6-7, 8-9

***O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!***

O LORD, our Lord, how glorious is your name over all the earth! What is man that you should be mindful of him, or the son of man that you should care for him?

***O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!***

You have made him little less than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him rule over the works of your hands, putting all things under his feet.

***O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!***

All sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field, The birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, and whatever swims the paths of the seas.

***O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!***

GOSPEL: Luke 24:35-48

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke:

The disciples of Jesus recounted what had taken place along the way, and how they had come to recognize him 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."

The Gospel of the Lord.

### **Reflection for Thursday in the Octave of Easter**

I have always wondered why, when all these crowds of people saw the miracles and wonders Jesus, and later his disciples, performed, that only some and not all came to faith. Seeing is not believing. I have also wondered if all those whom Jesus healed came to faith. The scriptures do not say for sure, but only one leper, a Samaritan, returned to Jesus in faith. Perhaps healing is not believing either. We've just heard, or read, Peter's eloquent preaching. Not all believed his words. Hearing a good homily is not believing. How do people come to faith? Only by God's grace.

When I ask myself why I believe, I can give no good reason. When I say, "Jesus is the Risen Lord," I do so solely through faith. This I can not prove. Even when I say it, it may not be true. That's the power of faith. Along with faith, there is also doubt. I like to use love as an example. We accept another's love by faith. Another accepts our love for them by faith too. We trust each other on our words and actions. As the late BB King wrote in his song, "Nobody loves me but my mother and she may be jiving too!" Love can never be proven, just like God. That's appropriate for God is love.

We put faith in God and each other. These are mysteries. Such a mystery can not be solved or fully understood. We experience such mysteries deeply and without really knowing how or why. Such experiences are part of our human life by our nature. Not all people may believe in God, but all people love. As Dean Martin once sang, "Everybody loves somebody sometime." Now and then I've pondered the significance of what we say we believe, "God is love." Do we really? Perhaps agnostics and atheists, in love, may be closer to God than we think. But we don't think in God; we believe in God. Just a wonderment. We have prayed in the response, "O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth." God's name may be, in scripture, "I AM," as it is also "Love."

I have a few ghost stories. Two of my best chillers have personal roots. One was told by my grandmother and her brothers as it happened to them. I trusted them as witnesses. One happened to me and I trust myself. When I tell them I can still feel their chill. Yet, the story of

the once-dead Jesus' sudden appearance has never been a ghost story. Instead of a chill we can feel its intimate warmth. Unbelievers may have claimed the opposite so today's gospel has told us that Jesus had flesh, bones and wounds. As Jesus ate the baked fish, it went into his belly and didn't fall to the floor. We believe this story even when none of us have ever encountered the risen Jesus in this manner. We have come to know Jesus as we gather together in his name. We experience him in the Eucharist as we break and share Communion. As we gather for this, we become the body and blood of Jesus that we share; Jesus' Church.

What does it mean for Jesus to become the Risen Lord? It certainly was not life as usual. Although Jesus appeared to the disciples, breathed on them, ate with them and spoke with them, it was never the same as before he died. His presence was evanescent and sporadic. There seemed to be no rhyme or rationale for his presence. Today, no one experiences the Risen Lord in person; it's always in Spirit and community. Jesus is still alive and with us. Jesus is a mere thought or gathering away.

We are an Easter people. We believe through the grace of the Holy Spirit; the same one who gifted those in the upper room with faith on the first Pentecost. We have always known the Risen Jesus as we do and our faith is strong. We have heard the Word and believe. We believe in God and in Jesus. Our faith is the sign of God's love in us and that we have received God's gift of eternal life. We have never seen as did the apostles and early disciples. Not all who experienced Jesus risen believed. Those first believers received the same gift from God that we have; faith in God and in Jesus, God's son. They live with Jesus in eternal life. For us, we have the same gift now as we await its fullness, yet to come.

As we know the Risen Lord, may we know Jesus' peace.

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