

# Reflection for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter, Cycle A

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The readings for this Sunday can be found at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/042620.cfm>.

## **1st Reading:** *Acts 2:14, 22-33*

This is a part of Peter's proclamation at Pentecost, after the Holy Spirit was given. It is an example of what is called the Apostolic Kerygma, the first preaching. It contains three proclamations; He is risen, He is Lord, He is the fulfillment of the promises God made to Israel. We hear two of them here; His is risen and is the fulfillment of the promises.

## **2nd Reading:** *1 Peter 1:17-21*

We hear Peter tell the people "you were ransomed from your futile conduct, handed on by your ancestors", that's from observance of the Law as a means of salvation. That has been replaced by faith in God [which, if authentic, results in observance of the Law]. [my comment] Similar to the Reformation period faith vs works argument.

## **Gospel:** *Luke 24:13-35*

**"...he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread."** Lk 24:35

This is a unique resurrection appearance story. All the other resurrection appearance stories, in the Gospels, are about recognizing Jesus through physical site or touch. In this story, the two disciples recognized Jesus in the celebration of what we today call the Mass.

How could it be that they were celebrating the Mass three days after Jesus died? Did the Church organize itself that quickly? No, it wasn't formally organized, but the disciples carried out what we recognize as the elements of the mass. They gathered, maybe because they needed the community of the disciple to go on. They went to temple, at the normal hours, to pray. Maybe that was similar to our Liturgy of the Word. And they broke bread together. They shared meals together as Jesus told them to do at the Last Supper. These meals became ritualized and were shared every week, on the Lord's day from early on.

This Gospel selection tells us that the disciples recognized Jesus' presence in the "breaking of the bread". The "breaking of the bread" was the early Church's term for those ritualized meals. Remember, they didn't recognize him because of his physical presence, but it was in the "breaking of the bread". And they immediately commented upon how their hearts were burning within them as he opened up the Scriptures to them. In this selection, Luke wants us to understand that we can, and should, experience the risen Lord in our Eucharistic gathering.

The Church teaches that the Lord is really and truly present in the Eucharistic celebration in four modes. He is present, in a special way, in the consecrated bread and wine. He is present in the Word proclaimed. He is present in the community gathered. And he is present in the person of the celebrating priest. That last one is the hardest for me to explain because the personalities of us priests, sometimes cover up his presence.

I think the specialness of his presence in the consecrated bread and wine is due to what we call transubstantiation. Transubstantiation is the term we use to explain that the bread and wine no longer exist once Jesus becomes present, it is only his presence from that time on. This is a spiritual reality; the other realities are easier to understand. They are called consubstantiation. Jesus's presence in the community, the word proclaimed and the celebrant, is Jesus's presence with the presence of the other still there. In those three, his presence can sometimes not be felt but at other times his presence may come through strongly.

I think different people naturally experience his presence in one or more of these modes stronger than others. I think the question for us is "How do I most naturally experience his presence at Mass?" Then remember that he is present in the other modes as well, and ask "How can I open myself to the risen Lord's presence in these other modes?"

### **Reflection:**

And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?" So they set out at once...

Lk 24:30-33

### **Question:**

What words or phrases jumped out at you during the Liturgy of the Word on Sunday? What connection do those words or phrases have to your day-to-day life? (Why do you think they jumped out at you?) What might God be trying to say to you through these words or phrases? What response should you make? What action should you take?

### **Alternative:**

Reflect upon and share about your experience of God's love along the way of your life. Do you see that as an experience of the risen Lord? Was there an action you took in response to those experiences? How can you connect those experiences to your celebrating the Mass with us? How can you open yourself to more regularly experiencing the Lord?

## Verse by Verse:

Lk 24:13 “Now that very day...” | Luke is careful to point out that the Resurrection, the appearances and the Ascension occur on the same day.

Lk 24:13 “...to a village... called Emmaus.” | The location of the ancient Emmaus reference here is disputed. Many believe it refers to Emmaus-Nicopolis. It was known as Amwas, in Arabic, until destroyed during the 6-day war in 1967. It was a fortified Roman army camp during the first century CE. It is more than double the distance from Jerusalem stated in this account, but some manuscripts give a distance very close to its distance from Jerusalem.

Lk 24:15 “...while they were conversing and debating...” | This is more than just a conversation. Evidently, there were differences in their interpretation of the events they were discussing.

Lk 24:16 “...but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.” | It is significant that this story is not about the physical sighting of Jesus, whereas the other resurrection stories are about physical sight.

Lk 24:19 “...who was a prophet...” | Their level of faith about Jesus was that he was a man.

Lk 24:21 “But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel.” | They had devastatingly lost the faith that they once had.

Lk 24:24 “But him they did not see.” | They had heard the stories but, sill, they were depending upon physical sight.

Lk 24:27 “...he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.” | Imagery of the Liturgy of the Word of the Mass.

Lk 24:30 “...he took bread...” | Jesus was their guest, but he took over the responsibilities of the host.

Lk 24:30 “...took... said the blessing... broke... and gave...” | Eucharistic imagery of the Mass.

Lk 24:31 “...with that their eyes were opened” | I take this to mean their spiritual eyes.

Lk 24:32 “...on the way...” | Oftentimes Luke uses the concept of “on the way” in the sense of leading to some purpose. Jesus on the way to Jerusalem to die is signal (Lk 12:22). (see also Lk 7:27, Lk 9:52, Lk 10:3-4, Lk 12:58, Lk 12:33, Lk 20:22 and Lk 24:32-35) The early Church, according to Acts of the Apostles was called “The Way”. (see Acts 9:12, Acts 18:25-26, Acts 19:9, Acts 19:23, Acts 22:4, Acts 24:14 and Acts 24:22)

Lk 24:33 “So they set out at once...” | They immediately went out to witness to the risen Lord. This is what, at the end of every Mass, we are sent out to do. Again, this is imagery of the Mass.

Lk 24:35 “...what had taken place on the way...” | See comment on verse 32, above.

Lk 24:35 “...he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.” | The breaking of the bread was an early term for referring to the Mass. Luke wants to point out how the Lord is encountered in the

Mass. Luke uses the term twice, here and in Acts 2:42. The act of breaking bread, in the Mass, is also referred to in Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor: 10:16.