

### 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER (B) LUKE 24: 35 – 48 (APRIL 2018)

THE LITURGY OF THE LAST TWO SUNDAYS HAS PRESENTED US WITH GOSPEL READINGS FROM ST. JOHN; BUT THIS SUNDAY WE HEAR FROM ST. LUKE. THERE ARE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ACCOUNTS OF THE FOUR GOSPEL WRITERS, BUT THEY HAVE ENOUGH IN COMMON FOR US TO REALIZE THAT THEY DON`T DIFFER IN ESSENTIALS BUT ONLY IN PERSPECTIVE. JOHN CONSIDERS IT IMPORTANT TO HIGHLIGHT THOMAS` REFUSAL TO BELIEVE AS WE HEARD LAST WEEKEND. THIS RESULTS IN JESUS MAKING ANOTHER APPEARANCE A WEEK LATER IN THE UPPER ROOM AND INVITING THOMAS TO TOUCH HIS WOUNDS.

AS TODAY`S GOSPEL STORY BEGINS, THE DISCIPLES, GATHERED IN THAT UPPER ROOM, ARE HEARING THE ACCOUNT OF THEIR TWO FRIENDS WHO HAVE JUST RETURNED FROM EMMAUS AFTER THE POWERFUL EXPERIENCE OF MEETING THE RISEN JESUS.

ALL OF A SUDDEN THERE IS JESUS AMONG THEM. HE GIVES THEM THE CONVENTIONAL GREETING OF THE DAY, `PEACE BE WITH YOU`, IN HEBREW `SHALOM`. THIS PHRASE IN THE GREEK LANGUAGE IS NOT A SENTENCE AND IT CAN BE TAKEN AS A GREETING WISH OR A STATEMENT OF FACT. AND AS WE SEE HERE AND IN OTHER PLACES IN THE GOSPEL, THE MERE PRESENCE OF JESUS DOES BRING PEACE AND JOY.

THE DISCIPLES FIRST REACTION IS FEAR AND ALARM. AS ANY PERSON, ANY ONE OF US WOULD HAVE REACTED. JESUS IS DEAD AND SO

THIS MUST BE HIS GHOST. BUT JESUS REASSURES THEM; HE POINTS OUT THAT HIS BODY IS SOLID, IT IS REAL. HE INVITES EACH OF THEM TO TOUCH HIS HANDS AND HIS FEET. GHOSTS DON`T HAVE FLESH AND BONES. IN ONE SENSE, THIS IS NOT THE JESUS WHO DIED ON THE CROSS (HE CAN APPEAR THROUGH CLOSED DOORS AND IN DIFFERENT LOCATIONS), BUT IT IS STILL FULLY THE SAME PERSON THEY HAD ALWAYS KNOWN.

NOW THEIR FEELINGS TURN TO INEXPRESSIBLE JOY. AS THEY LOOK ON HIM WITH A MIXTURE OF HAPPINESS AND WONDER, HE PUSHES THEM A BIT FURTHER AND ASKS FOR FOOD TO EAT. GHOSTS DON`T EAT. JESUS IS TRULY RISEN; HE IS STILL FULLY IN OUR WORLD AND PART OF IT ALTHOUGH IN A VERY DIFFERENT WAY FROM GOOD FRIDAY. HE EXISTS IN A DIVINE FORM; ABLE TO APPEAR SUDDENLY, NO LONGER BOUND BY SCIENTIFIC LAWS OF SPACE AND TIME. LUKE`S GOSPEL TOGETHER WITH HIS ACTS OF THE APOSTLES MAY WELL BE CALLED THE GOOD NEWS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

NOW, AS HE DID WITH THE DISCIPLES GOING TO EMMAUS, HE EXPLAINED HOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM WAS FORETOLD CLEARLY IN THE SCRIPTURES: THE LAW OF MOSES, THE PROPHETS AND THE PSALMS. HIS SUFFERING AND DEATH WERE NOT TRAGEDIES; HIS RESURRECTION WAS NO SURPRISE. IT WAS ALL PART OF GOD`S PLAN.

BUT IT DOES NOT STOP THERE. IN THE NAME OF JESUS WHO SUFFERED, DIED AND ROSE, - FORGIVENESS OF SIN, THAT IS TOTAL

RECONCILIATION WITH GOD, WAS TO BE PROCLAIMED TO THE WHOLE WORLD. THIS MESSAGE IS PUT INTO WORDS IN THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN TODAY: “HE IS THE ATONING SACRIFICE FOR OUR SINS, AND NOT FOR OURS ONLY BUT ALSO FOR THE SINS OF THE WHOLE WORLD.” AND THEN COMES THEIR MISSION AND MANDATE: “YOU ARE WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS.” WE SEE THIS MISSION BEING CARRIED OUT AS PETER SPEAKS TO THE PEOPLE IN TODAY`S FIRST READING. HE EXPLAINS THE REAL MEANING OF WHAT HAPPENED TO JESUS AND HOW HIS LISTENERS ARE TO RESPOND THE MESSAGE. IT IS THE MESSAGE WE HEARD AT THE BEGINNING OF LENT 9 WEEKS AGO – REPENT AND TURN TO GOD...

OBVIOUSLY, THIS MISSION AND MANDATE IS ALSO FOR US. WE ALSO, THROUGH OUR BAPTISM AND MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST, HAVE RECEIVED THE SAME MISSION. WITHOUT OUR COOPERATING WITH JESUS, THE MESSAGE OF RECONCILIATION AND FORGIVENESS WILL NOT BE HEARD. IT IS NOT ENOUGH FOR US SIMPLY TO HEAR THE MESSAGE AND IMPLEMENT IT IN OUR OWN LIVES.

AGAIN, FROM TODAY`S SECOND READING, IF WE SAY WE HAVE COME TO KNOW HIM WE MUST OBEY HIS COMMANDMENTS. IT IS CLEAR THAT BY `KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS` HE MEANS ABOVE ALL THE NEED TO FOLLOW THE COMMANDMENT OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE – TO LOVE OTHERS AS JESUS HAS LOVED US. IT IS UP TO EACH ONE OF US TODAY TO ASK HOW, IN OUR OWN LIVES, IN OUR OWN WAY WE CAN SHARE THE MESSAGE WITH THE PEOPLE WE LIVE WITH AND THOSE WE

MEET.

ALL AROUND US THERE ARE PEOPLE THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD CHRIST`S TEACHING. MORE AND MORE AMONG US WHEN ASKED TO FILL OUT THE CENSUS CLAIM `NO RELIGION` OR NON-PRACTICING WHEN ASKED ABOUT THEIR FAITH. THEY`RE NOT SURE WHAT TO BELIEVE ANY MORE. THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR. IT IS FOUND IN THE PURSUIT OF MONEY AND POSSESSIONS; IT IS FOUND IN THE ESCAPE INTO DRUGS AND ALCOHOL AND IN THE SEARCH FOR MEANING IN THE LIVES OF MANY OF OUR YOUTH.

THE GOOD NEWS FOR EACH OF US HERE IS THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL LEAD PEOPLE LIKE THEM INTO OUR LIVES; WE DON`T HAVE TO SEARCH. NO ONE IS CALLED TO BE A CHRISTIAN FOR HIMSELF OR HERSELF. EVERY TIME WE COME TO MASS WE RECEIVE THE GREAT GIFT OF GOD`S GRACE IN THE WORD AND IN THE SACRAMENT. AND THEN WE ARE COMMISSIONED AT EVERY MASS TO TAKE WHAT WE HAVE RECEIVED AND BRING IT TO THE WORLD AROUND US.

THOSE YOUTH AND THE MEN AND WOMEN WE MEET NEED TO HEAR THAT GREETING JESUS SHARED WITH HIS DISCIPLES THAT FIRST EASTER: `PEACE BE WITH YOU` AND TO EXPERIENCE THE PEACE THAT ONLY JESUS CAN GIVE. WILL I BE THE ONE TO CARRY THAT MESSAGE TODAY TO EVEN ONE OTHER PERSON, THIS WEEK? WILL YOU?

GO IN PEACE GLORIFYING THE LORD WITH YOUR LIFE!