

[Spirituality](#)



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by Thomas Gumbleton

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On this third Sunday of Easter, we continue to reflect on that most extraordinary, unique event of all of human history: the rising of Jesus from the dead. Last Sunday you may remember, we had the Gospel that many of us, I think, find especially comforting. It was the story about the appearance of Jesus the week after Easter when, if you remember, Thomas who had not been there on Easter was present.

Third Sunday of Easter

[April 15, 2018](#)

Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

Psalms 4

1 John 2:1-5a

Luke 24:35-48

Thomas had refused to believe, but then when Jesus comes in a week later, he tells Thomas, "Look at my hands. Touch my wounds, the wound in my side." Thomas immediately falls to his knees and says, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus said the words that I think we find so helpful, "Blessed are you Thomas because you now believe, but even more blessed are those who don't see and believe," in other words, all of us. We don't have that opportunity that Thomas and the other disciples had — to see Jesus physically present, to touch him. In today's Gospel he makes it so real; he eats with them. "But blessed," Jesus says, "are those who do not see and yet believe," so we are blessed.

Last Sunday in the Gospel was the event that the disciples discussed in today's Gospel, the event where the two disciples were heading home on Easter Sunday sad, discouraged, disappointed, and saying to one another, "We had so hoped that he was the one who was to restore Israel. He's gone." But then in the story Jesus begins to walk with them, and as they're going along, Jesus says, "What are you talking about?" (They evidently were in kind of a heated discussion.) They said, "You must be the only one who doesn't know what happened over the last three days." "What happened?" "Jesus of Nazareth, the one we thought was going to restore Israel was tortured, crucified, died. Some people say he rose, but we don't know."

Then Jesus began to explain all the Scriptures to them, all those that spoke about Jesus as Messiah.

They're walking along and it's getting late, they come to an inn, and Jesus makes as though he's going to go on, but they say, "Come in and have supper with us." So he does and then during that meal he takes bread, he blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them. Then he's gone. That's when they run back to Jerusalem and we hear in today's Gospel: "Jesus," they tell everybody, "We just met him on the road!" What an experience it was for them.

The two things that happened along the way and at the inn are two things that we really need to reflect on because that's how we too will come to know Jesus. On their way back to Jerusalem they're saying to one another, "Weren't our hearts burning within us when he explained the Scriptures?" He was present to them in that word of God. Every week we too have the Scriptures and if we really listen — in fact, I think it's even more important if we prepare ahead of time, read those Scriptures over, think about them, reflect on them, and then engage in the liturgy with an openness to hear God's word being spoken about — then our hearts too will burn within us.

This is one of the ways that we come to know that Jesus really is alive because God's word is the living word, and when we listen to it deeply, it transforms us, we become aware of God's presence in our lives through his word. But we have to take the time to prepare ourselves, to listen openly with openness, willingness to hear deeply because the word of God will change us, transform us. It will bring us many, many blessings, but also challenge us to change our lives, to begin to live according to the way of Jesus. The word of God will bring the presence of Jesus into us, each of us, so we too, even though we don't see Jesus, we can experience his presence through this word of God.

But then also the second thing that happened on that journey when they go to the inn and they sit at the table and Jesus takes bread and blesses it and breaks it, what do you think about right away? Of course, the Last Supper: "This is my body broken for you." And then at the Last Supper: "This is the cup of my blood given for you." We experience that every Sunday, don't we? We have that opportunity at least to hear Jesus saying, "This is my body," as we celebrate the Eucharist, "My body broken for you, given for you out of love." Then the cup: "This is the cup of my blood poured forth out of love for you."

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Those first disciples, as soon as they experienced that breaking of the bread, they knew it was Jesus and they rejoiced and went back and told the rest: "Look, this is what happened. He's alive; he's with us." We too can have that same experience when we come in the spirit of faith and openness to the table of God here in this church as he breaks the bread, pours forth his love in the symbol of the wine given as his blood. That too will change our lives, bring us the joy of confidence that yes, Jesus is risen, Jesus is alive, and we too will share everlasting life.

So if we truly reflect on this experience of those first disciples and try to not only hear it, understand it, but to come every week prepared to experience that presence of Jesus in his word and in the Eucharist, we too will strengthen our faith and know that he is alive, and we can rejoice in that truth and prepare ourselves too to live forever in the fullness of life that Jesus shows us in his resurrection. But again, it's also meant to change our lives now so that we live according to his word, according to his way, if we bring his goodness, his love, his peace, his joy into our world. We rejoice in the gifts we give, but we let our lives be transformed so that we can spread the message of Jesus wherever we go.

[Homily given April 15, 2018 at St. Philomena in Detroit, Michigan. The transcripts of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton's homilies are [posted weekly](#) to NCRonline.org. [Sign up here](#) to receive an email alert when the latest homily is posted.]