

St Pius & St Anthony 3rd Sunday Easter Year B2 (Lk 24:35-48)

Jesus continues appearing! Just considering Luke's gospel, this is the third time. The chronology breaks out like this: Mary Magdalene and others find an empty tomb and relate it to apostles. Then Peter checks it out, and it's left at that. The tomb is empty. Then Jesus appears to these two disciples leaving Jerusalem out on road, and they rush back to the others, bursting at the seams to tell the others, and just as they start their story, they are told that Jesus appeared to Peter. They proceed on telling their story, and Jesus shows up right then (ultimate validation!) I wonder if they said, "*See that is what I'm taking about!*" You mention Jesus, and He shows up.

I love to point out under what circumstances Jesus showed himself to these two disciples. Notice it happened when they also were embodying with their own lives, the exact conduct (words and actions) Jesus would have done. As they walk along the road, they welcome a stranger (*corporal work of mercy #4 Matt 25:35*)- Luke said they were conversing & debating so they could have pushed him away, saying "No joiners, this is a private argument. But no, they kindly welcomed a stranger just like Jesus would have. Then later on, they invite this lonely stranger into their home for dinner (*corporal works #1 & 2 'feed hungry' and 'drink to thirsty' Matt 25:35*). So, I note that it is during their imitation of Jesus that He reveals himself to them. If you want to encounter Jesus, then start by imitating His actions and words. We might call that 'evangelization' sharing the good news of Jesus with others, whether it is what we are saying (using His Words) or what we are doing (ministry in His Name). Luke 24:36 says "*While they were still speaking about this, Jesus stood in their midst....*" In the sharing-retelling of who Jesus is. He will manifest Himself. That is a pattern (*'Two or Three gathered in My Name, there Am I' Matthew 18:20*). While these two are sharing their testimony, Jesus shows up to validate their story.

Now also behind the scenes, I see Jesus is up to something else. Only Luke and John's gospels, seem to be driving home an additional point, that there was some splitting up/fracturing among the apostles. John has Thomas' story about him running off alone out there by himself, and here in Luke we see these two disciples are disbanding, dejectedly leaving the group. In both cases, Jesus appears, to get them back together (*like a music band's reunion tour- maybe like the punk rock group Blink 182 comeback album title track, "One More Time"*) Jesus' appearance functions to keep them together –also makes sense of his emphasis on 'Peace'/Forgiveness.

But what do make about the gospel's talk of ghosts? Seeing Jesus, the apostles must have been rubbing their eyes, asking, "Is He still there? Could it be a mirage?" Maybe they thought they were just experiencing that wishful imagination that happens, when like you miss somebody so badly that you think you see them all over the place: 'There they are' but it's not them, and then again, 'Oh, that's them' and its still not. But I also remember that this is not the first time that they saw Jesus and almost wrote Him off as 'ghost' (*Matthew 14:26* "When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear...")

So, to help the apostles with conviction/certainty about His resurrection, Jesus offers a three-step authentication process for them. Firstly, He says, 1) "Look at these wounds-showing them His hands/feet" Lk 24:39. There was a discrediting theory of impersonation (a body-double for Jesus) circulating, but by Jesus displaying His actual wounds, He disproves that. How could you find a person as a double-an impersonating stand-in, who would allow the near fatal wounds themselves to be inflicted, recreated on them just to create a resurrection ruse. Jesus shows His wounds to say 'This is the real ME' – the wounds (deep gash in side, and nail holes-torn flesh on feet/hands) prove it, much like scars/tattoos are used to positively ID bodies in morgues). Yet, another 2) authentication occurs when Jesus says, "Touch me and see' (Lk 24:39). He is saying, 'This is real flesh-feel me'. The resurrected Jesus is no 'group hallucination' or vision, like some modern day projected hologram-AI generated replay like you might have seen I Los Vegas show of the long dead Elvis or Prince just digitally recreated and displayed on stage. Jesus disproves this type of refutation of the resurrection, by saying (*not like rapper MC Hammer*), Jesus says "You can touch this". I wonder if Jesus even turned sideways, like models do on the catwalk, to further show his dimensionality (3-D), and that he was no stand-up cardboard cut-out figure! This invitation to touch Him was Jesus' demonstration that His was a 'substantial body' right in front of them. Touch this, it is Real!

And then for a third-step authentication, Jesus asks for food to eat! Not because He has been stored away in a tomb three days (*we know he can make it past 40 days-fasting desert-Luke 4:2*) No, Jesus asks for food to prove to everyone that His body is real and it works! (*He also eats on the seashore with Apostles in John 21- baking fish open fire.*) To eat in front of them, proves that His resurrected body physiologically works still. Put food in, and it moves through mouth and down esophagus for the digestive system to start breaking it down. He is no phantom. More than just being able to touch it, this body of His functions. Ghosts and projected fakes can't eat. Hand Caspar (friendly ghost) a chicken nugget, and he

can't even hold it, or put to His mouth, it will drop instantly to the floor-no insides *(or have you seen the M & M candy commercial around Halloween, when two of them are sitting, talking and the one says he thinks he made it alive through another Halloween[he hasn't-he was eaten/died] and he grabs for a handful of candy from a bowl and can't pick anything up-his hand just passes through it)*

Or I remember as a kid thinking how wasteful the cookie monster was – he never really ate cookies (he couldn't-his throat was sewed shut to cover the puppeteer's hand underneath) he just put them to his mouth and they shot into pieces flying all over the place-maybe that is why he was so voracious about trying to eat them-actually starving!

So when Jesus here asks for food, He is convincingly demonstrating that he was Really Present and this resurrected body was flesh and blood too, like theirs!

Yet, most satisfying and convincingly of all, would have been the personal Bible Study Jesus conducts with them as Luke 24:45 says He opened their minds to understand the scriptures about Him. Jesus reviewed the Old Testament prophecies pointing out all the references to the Messiah and how He fulfilled them. That would be a more lasting proof. Now they understand how His life and teaching, his work and ministry and even his death and resurrection fit into the saving plan of God for us. And that goes on and on, even to today. As we gather in every mass, we also come to know Jesus better and strengthen our conviction in His resurrection by reading and reflecting on the scripture-what we are doing right now, as then we move into a close imitation of His Last Supper words and deeds, where He manifests himself to us (Real Presence-body and Blood) in the retelling of that First Eucharist -the Breaking of the Bread. As we imitate His words and actions, He shows Himself to us, too!