

St Pius & St Anthony 3rd Easter Sunday Year B Homily

With Jesus appearing again in today's gospel He is masterfully confirming again His faithful presence to His disciples, yet He is also preparing them for His forward-going manner of making known His presence by what we now call 'Mass' or the apostles and earliest church called the 'breaking of the bread'. We say this is Jesus' real presence. And it is, when he was 'really' present risen and in bodily form to those first disciples, and for us now sacramentally, in 'flesh and blood' really in the Holy Eucharist – Breaking of Bread that we participate in each week. So, as we move on through these Easter Sundays, Jesus faithfully keeps showing up risen and alive among his followers. Our gospel today is a great example of how Jesus continued to show Himself, really resurrected. Luke's gospel actually has a full four step demonstration of the reality of Jesus' physical resurrection. And it may help us up front to say what Jesus' resurrection wasn't. It was real, -corporeal we say, physical. It was not like how scenes may be demonstrated in movies, like a couple we could run through now- Jesus' resurrection was not a corporate hallucination, not anything spooky or goulish, not anything fabricated by a magician's art, it is Jesus, truly Him risen bodily from the dead and physically interacting with the disciples again. It was not a wispy vision like in the Lion King, of Simba hearing-imagining his father Mufasa give him his life direction and mission statement. And Jesus' resurrection was not a conjured group experience like the cartoon Ninja Turtles gathered around a campfire calling up by the spirit of their Master Splinter, and it was not like the Star Wars Saga having an inner voice like Obi-One or Yoda to confirm the young Luke Skywalker. No, with Jesus in today's gospel, we are reading about historical eyewitness accounts filled with tangible, touchable physical elements detailing Jesus' varied encounters after having risen from the dead. Today we hear Luke tell of Jesus appearances even being synchronized as an 'initial set-up opening act to one or two people' that He then fulfills by showing Himself to the whole group as validation (first to two disciples on road to Emmaus, then the rest of the group back in Jerusalem, all right before he reappears to everyone all gathered together- which is the same method echoed in the Thomas two step appearances- The church learned from these that Jesus would appear as they kept together and kept sharing all he said & did.)

Yet Jesus knew full well that doubt and denial were real among people too. He knew that even such an unparalleled event as a self-resurrected being returning to daily human interactions with people would be rejected or doubted to no end—Don't we remember when he predicted such obstinate disbelief back when he told the parable of Lazarus, Abraham & the rich man—when the rich man said to Abraham 'Oh send back Lazarus to warn my brothers of this place-death', and Abraham responded, "If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should

rise from the dead' (Luke 16:31). There will always be naysayers, and negaters. If you saw the movie 'Cool Hand Luke' with Paul Newman, then 'it's the way they want it'- some people just won't believe even if the dead rise!

But our gospel writer Luke today is trying to outline in the most physical way possible, that 'Yes, Jesus rose' and continued to appear in a bodily-physical way many times after his resurrection and before his ascension into heaven.

So what are these four physical demonstrations I've been talking about:

- First, 1) **Jesus talks and gives a message so consistent** with what he had always taught them. (They knew his message; He gently re-introduces himself to them by giving words that would have been in continuity with all his earlier teaching...) If he had reappeared talking about cracking heads, then they should have doubted, as they would have said that this doesn't sound anything like the Jesus they spent three or thirty years living and ministering with.) But, His first word again is 'Peace be with you' which is also completely consistent-parallel w/ Thomas story
- Secondly, 2) **Jesus volunteers contact** – no fear of a string or light being exposed as if it would be an illusion or magical trick-with those can't touch the stage props! Jesus says, "Touch me- I am flesh and bones, I feel just like you'
- Thirdly, 3) As if to answer doubts that he might be imposter, like a body-double or close looking cousin, **He shows them His hands and feet (His still open flesh wounds)**, for what imposter would go through the duplicating and simulation of having nails run through his hands-feet or take a chest wound with a lance to just play a game of 'look at me'/ Yes, some stunt men-women risk a little injury but who would submit to fatal wounds to fake something. So if wounds are real and demonstrable, then yes this is the same bodily Jesus
- Fourthly, and I think the clincher, 4) **Jesus asks for food!** Some people interpret this as Jesus saying, 'I have been closed away like a hibernating bear and now that I'm out I am hungry, and hungry as a hostage!' Maybe, but I find that a little superficial (what's 3days, when he had fasted 40 days before), but I think on a much deeper level it has so much more to do with Jesus saying '**I'm real**' and this **body 'works just like yours'** Share me some food, and I will eat in front of you. Ghosts, visions, tricks, 3-d holograms don't eat-how do you hide food in a projection of light or ethereal vision? And I know this next point may be a little gross, but Jesus is also proving to doubters with this food eating action that He has a real risen body. I find He is demonstrating here what any doctor nurse or aid knows about what must happen before discharging folks from hospitals; before you get to leave you have to prove that your intestines work, eat for me and I have to chart it and then yes even literally do a second thing for me to

prove that the insides are moving... So Jesus is saying, 'This body is real' and really risen again from the dead-it is physical and moving.

But I think at this point Jesus is just getting started with His disciples. The real ongoing revelation of Himself with them is going to become through His Ascension/ Pentecost glorification, what we call the sacrament of His true 'Body and Blood'. Today Jesus is reminding them of His institution (the 'do this in memory of me' part of Mass) of the Holy Eucharist back on the night before he died. The Passover, the recalling of God's Word active in history and the common sharing of food in prayer, that becomes Jesus' real presence for us. What we call Mass- or Luke, Paul and all the first church called the 'Breaking of the Bread'. And that it is in this re-embodiment of Jesus' words and acts from the Last Supper that make 'real and manifest' His presence (Yes, this teaching runs all through Jesus' words, like when He said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name-There am I" Matt 18:20, and in Luke 12:37 'Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival... He seat them table will wait on them", or in John 17:24 "That where I am they also may be with me,"- and of course, 'This is my Body-My Blood') Yes, His 'real presence' is made known forever after, His resurrection in the 'breaking of the bread' the Early Church practiced and we continue to do what he commanded us to, until each time he comes again. And He does. What a gift we have here every week. Jesus is certainly alive and present among us! And we give Him thanks!