

Unbelief to Disbelief to Belief  
April 18, 2021, Third Sunday of Easter  
Gospel of Luke 24:35-48  
Fr. Brad

Have you ever come to experience something that you never thought would ever be possible but then there it was, it happened anyway and you are dumbfounded, surprised, maybe numb, maybe shocked, or maybe traumatized. These unforeseen traumatic experiences can be very positive or can be very negative.

An unforeseen event like a car accident can be very traumatizing in a negative way and throw us into crisis. They are events that, though intellectually we know they can occur, are events beyond our everyday experience and we may not be prepared for them. The loss of a loved one unexpectedly can do the same. However, there are other experiences that are unbelievable and positive hard to imagine but true as well. Our wedding day, perhaps, the birth of a child, that new job, acceptance into a particular educational institution, particularly powerful when you finally experience it for yourself for the first time. Life's events can inspire us to new heights, and they can also suddenly alter our lives or turn them upside down at the drop of a hat.

In our readings today there is once again experience of the unexpected. The whole Easter season is filled with an air of new and fresh hope. The death and resurrection of Jesus takes us more deeply into the experience of life and its fullness, always prompting us to experience it at a more complete level regardless of our life circumstance.

In the Gospel, we have another resurrection appearance account. This account takes us well beyond the abstract idea of what the resurrection means and definitively speaks of bodily resurrection.

Amidst excited conversation among the disciples about the experience of the two on the road to Emmaus, Jesus himself appears before them once again. This time he challenges them to see the resurrected Jesus as the same person they had come to know in life. At first they thought they were seeing a ghost.

But something of the glorified body is revealed here which identifies the person of Jesus. And He manifests a certain physicality by way of His inviting them *to see and touch him to confirm he has flesh and bone*. And in response to their continued disbelieving and wondering amidst their joy, Jesus asks for *something to eat*.

What do we make of this account? Yes it is indeed the Jesus they know and there is more to life than we readily see and more to life than trying to avoid suffering and death. He is raised from the dead in spite of it all. And there is something about the human body that carries significance, a now glorified body. Somehow the Lord is revealing to them something of what is to come for them as well. Like the transfiguration experience, the world above connects us with hear and now.

There is something of the risen life of Jesus that is meant for us to live by today. We can live as a resurrection people. At Pentecost we will be celebrating the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which guides God's people here and now already in this life and not just after our bodily death.

When we look at our first reading, we remember how Peter and the apostles went through extreme trauma at the death of Jesus and yet things turned around very quickly and then all of a sudden everything was very positive the resurrection of Jesus gave them a new and bright hope with a brand new perspective, a brighter and fuller perspective of life and love. Both events were in themselves life changing - - in the first case, life shattering and in the second, life rebirthing. And we see how in their ministry they continue to proclaim Jesus death and resurrection and that he had been glorified by God.

In our first reading from Acts, Peter implicates his listeners in the crucifixion of Jesus. Each is urged to come to terms with their own weakness and vulnerability and sinfulness. It is hard for them to hear what Peter is saying about them. After all, he is accusing them of being party to killing Jesus, the very author of life, but Peter qualifies by saying that what unfolded was necessary in order that they recognize how blind they had been to that reality and that they need to re-examine and amend the way they were living and seeing the world. This would entail an upheaval of perspective and a recognition of the need for dependence upon God in a more profound way. The apostles had to go through this and so the listeners to the apostles as they continue to proclaim the resurrection must come to terms with it as well. We are among those he is addressing. This applies to us today.

Perhaps a strong message in this first reading is the realization that each one of us must find a way to **come to terms with the ways we have been in denial or unbelieving of something that reality of life has been challenging us to accept.** Do we always have to see in order to believe or do we believe only what fits into our present view of the world? Are we afraid to change our mind? Do we fear losing face if we have to say, 'I got it wrong.'? That's what repentance is. There are a lot of things in our lives because of human weakness that we must admit about ourselves and come to terms with. It's in our humility that we realize we need forgiveness for our ignorance, and ultimately accept it through the grace of God.

The way of Christ calls us to change our mind in a very profound way and accept realities about ourselves and our sinfulness but that it is not the last word. (We don't have to conceal it.) And then to accept the grace, the good news that we are loved by God anyway and that our God desires to build us up as his people, created for the real life, eternal life.

There is the temptation to dig our heels in at the first sign of uncertainty and mystery.

But we must be wary of when we cling because we are afraid of the uncertainty that goes with accepting a new way. In Jesus time and in the early years after his time, we

see the difficulty people were having in accepting what was coming to be called 'the way'.

In our second reading, John reminds us that, of course, we are called to be sinless and to live pure lives. But he qualifies this by saying, if anyone does sin, we do have an advocate with the Father in Jesus Christ who is the righteous one and who died for us as an atoning sacrifice for our sins and for the sins of the whole world. And rather than suggest that all of this hinges on a direct experience of God, following Christ has as much to do with obedience to his commandments and humbling ourselves before God as any secret inner experience of God. To obey His word is a manifestation of our loving God and allows God's love to reach its perfection within us. It's more in obedience and humility before God than our understanding of the mystery.

In our human frailty we all have a natural fear and apprehension about the unknown, particularly around death which houses the biggest uncertainty in life. And death is a part of everyday life in so many different ways.

But because of the resurrection, we find out we are indeed connected with the risen Christ even in our present world. In the Eucharist we once again welcome the presence of Christ in His Word and in His Body and Blood. The bread and wine made from human hands becomes our spiritual food and drink. Once again we see here expressed, the unification between heaven and earth.

Through the openness to the Divine Love of God, we give permission for the Spirit to manifest the presence of God through us here and now for the sake of the world. Amen