

EASTER SUNDAY III “B”

A Dutch sacramental theologian has stated: “Revelation is God allowing himself to be recognized.” This insight is borne out in this weekend’s Scriptures.

This weekend’s Gospel story is the conclusion of St. Luke’s account of the appearance of the risen Jesus to Cleopas and his unnamed companion on the road to Emmaus on Easter Sunday evening. Encountering Jesus through his word and the sacrament of their shared meal in the breaking of the bread, the two disciples return to Jerusalem and proclaim their revelation to the apostles and others gathered. In it we are given three ways the risen Jesus chooses to be recognized.

First, those gathered recognize Jesus in bodily, human form. He speaks to them a word “Peace”; his body bears the marks of the nails and spear, and like last week in John’s Gospel, he invites the disciples to “touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.” While no longer subject to the physical laws of nature in terms of time and space, Jesus still is united to his human body. This teaches us that eternal life is not solely a matter of “saving my soul.” We are redeemed body **and** soul. While physical death ends our physical life, in eternity we do not become disembodied spirits, angels, but complete the transfigurative process in divine life begun in baptism through divine grace and are now fully clothed in a glorified body. In that body we will recognize and be recognized. We profess this truth in the creed at Mass: “I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.”

Secondly, Jesus asks those gathered for something to eat. This request is further evidence of the reality of his glorified bodily existence. Ghosts do not get hungry or eat. At the same time something else is going on here. Up until now in the gospels, it is Jesus who does the feeding: the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish, the Last Supper, the meal at Emmaus. Now it is Jesus who asks to be fed. Jesus will not force relationship on us. He waits for us to invite him into and dine at the table of our hearts. Holy Communion is a two-way street. Like from the Emmaus disciples, the risen Jesus awaits our invitation: “Stay with us.”

Thirdly, like last weekend, Jesus reveals himself through the showing of his wounds. More than just the physical scars of his crucifixion, Jesus' wounds reveal the fullness of his love for us. They are the physical, but also the spiritual, marks of our sinfulness, our rejection of God revealed in Jesus. Simultaneously, they are the sacrament of our redemption. From them, from their blood we, all people, indeed the whole of creation, was reconciled with God, created anew. We come to encounter Jesus and Jesus reveals himself by entering into his wounds. Peter in today's reading from Acts testifies to this. Peter's own denial and betrayal of Jesus are not far from him. Our denials, our sins, are never so great that they cannot find healing and forgiveness in the wounds of Jesus. Pope Francis has stated: "In my own life I have so often seen God's merciful countenance, his patience; I have also seen so many people find courage to enter the wounds of Jesus by saying to him: Lord, I am here, accept my poverty, hide my sin in your wounds, wash it away with your blood. And I have seen that God did just this—he accepted them, consoled them, cleansed them, loved them."

At the same time the wounds of Jesus, as Pope Francis has also stated, are the means through which we encounter him in the world today. In the persons of the poor, the immigrant, the criminal, the widow, the orphan, the elderly, the abandoned, the hungry, the thirsty, all, at the "peripheries of life" as enumerated by Jesus in the Last Judgment scene in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, the basis for the church's teaching of the corporal works of mercy—here the wounded body of the risen Jesus waits to be recognized and served. In another address the Pope stated: "I sometimes ask people: "Do you give alms?" They say to me: "Yes, Father." "And when you give alms, do you look the person you are giving them in the eye?" "Oh, I don't know, I don't really notice." "Then you have not really encountered them." ... What Jesus teaches us first of all is to meet each other, and in meeting to each offer help. We must know how to meet each other. We must build, create, construct a culture of encounter."

"Lord, let your face shine upon us and we shall be saved."