

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTERTIDE (B) (2021)

A) INTRODUCTION

- the Resurrection of Jesus is the greatest event in the history of the world
- the greatest event in the Church's calendar
- the trouble is that nobody actually saw it happen
- we do know that something did happen, something extraordinary
- first of all, **the disciples found the tomb empty**
- the women went to the tomb on Easter morning to complete the burial rites for Jesus, but his body was not there
- secondly, different disciples spoke of **having met Jesus risen from the dead**, but people would not believe their stories
- then finally, the disciples themselves, transformed, **set out to preach to the whole world about the death and resurrection of Jesus.**

B) THE EMPTY TOMB

- the tomb was empty, so where was the body?
- some people claimed that **the disciples had come during the night, stolen it** and buried it somewhere else
- we are told that the disciples generally were in a state of despondency and deep sadness, as though everything had come to an end: no sign of a conspiracy there - and what about the soldiers guarding the tomb?
- some people thought that **Jesus had not really died, but had gone into a kind of swoon or coma**, and had revived and made his own way out of the tomb
- if the accounts of the passion are accurate, how could the soldiers fail to ensure that Jesus really had died; they would be failing in their duty as executioners
- some people thought that **he had been resuscitated**, and returned to the state he had been in before his death
- rather like Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead
- in which case Jesus would simply live on for a while and then die all over again

C) THE RESURRECTION APPEARANCES: THE SAME JESUS

- the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection are very important
- first of all because they show that Jesus' resurrection was a true bodily resurrection, not a trick, not a delusion
- in the Gospel accounts we hear how **Jesus speaks to his disciples, he allows them to touch him, he has meals with them**
- we see that in today's Gospel which happens on the evening of Easter day
- Jesus has already appeared to Mary Magdalene, to the other women, to Peter and to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus
- now they are all gathered together in the Upper Room, sharing their stories
- Jesus appears to them and **says, Peace be with you**

- they are terrified because they think they are seeing a ghost
- but Jesus reassures them that it really is himself and no ghost
- **he shows them the wounds in his hands and feet**
- **he invites them to touch him**
- and finally **he eats some fish**, and they can see that he is doing so
- he is not a ghost, he is truly alive, and it is the same person whose suffering and death they had witnessed just two days before

D) THE RESURRECTION APPEARANCES: "IN ANOTHER FORM"

- even so, there is something different about Jesus' "bodiliness" after the resurrection
- for one thing, in all the appearances of Jesus, **people just do not recognise him**
- Mary Magdalene thinks he is the Gardener, other disciples think he is a stranger, others (as in today's Gospel) think they are seeing a ghost
- **Jesus is able to come and go as he likes**, vanishing before their eyes, or passing through locked doors
- he still lived within his physical body but without the limits of time and space: Jesus had risen to a completely new kind of existence

E) THE RISEN JESUS TRANSFORMS HIS DISCIPLES

- Jesus transforms his disciples in several ways
- **he helps them to understand**: he explains the scriptures to them
- he shows how his death and resurrection are all part of God's plan, and foretold in the writings of the Old Testament
- also part of God's plan is **to reconcile the whole world to himself, to restore us to love and friendship with God**
- so Jesus speaks about how repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations
- and then he says: **you are witnesses to this**
- and on the Day of Pentecost, with the coming of the Holy Spirit, we see the disciples, filled with courage, filled with energy, carrying out this commission to witness to him

F) CONCLUSION

- the disciples are witnesses to the death and resurrection of Jesus
- they are witnesses to the love and mercy of God
- they are transformed because they have entered into a personal relationship with Christ
- they are transformed because they are filled with God's Spirit
- we, too, have entered into a personal relationship with Christ
- we, too, are filled with the same Spirit,
- and we, too, are called to be witnesses to the love and mercy of God
- and witnesses to the death and resurrection of Christ.