

## **3<sup>rd</sup> of Easter 2009**

*Acts 3.12-19; Luke 24.36b-48*

### ***Jesus' resurrection appearance***

In our second reading this morning, from St Luke's Gospel, we heard about the risen Lord Jesus appearing again to his disciples on the evening of the first Easter day. Already Jesus has appeared to two of them on the road to Emmaus; and while these two disciples are telling the others all about it, Luke tells us that suddenly 'Jesus himself stood among them.'

You would think that the disciples would be overcome with joy and happiness; but Luke writes that they were 'startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit.' So Jesus immediately seeks to reassure them. He says to them:

*'Why are you so troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me; and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.'*

And as if the invitation to feel his body and know that he was no spirit was not enough, then Jesus goes further; he asks them for something to eat, and they give him a piece of broiled fish. Ghosts do not eat!

### ***The Miraculous Life***

The resurrection of Jesus was a miracle of God, an incredible event. It set off a chain of miracles in turn. The first was in turning that group of frightened disciples into a spiritually supercharged group of believers who founded the early church. The other miracles were those done at the hands of those transformed apostles; for example, our first reading this morning from the Acts of the Apostles was about the aftermath of a miracle done at the hands of Peter and John; the healing of a lame beggar at the gate of the temple. The lame beggar asks Peter for alms; Peter, on fire with the Holy Spirit responds by saying, 'I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.' And Luke, who also wrote Acts, says that the lame beggar leapt up, and went with Peter and John into temple, walking and leaping and praising God.

It was a miraculous time for Peter and John and the lame beggar, and for those disciples when the Risen Lord appeared to them. Reality, as they knew it, was completely transformed; the impossible was suddenly possible. They began to know the Lord's risen life within themselves; and that was truly miraculous.

### ***In the Easter Season***

And so we find ourselves, reading and hearing about what it was like for those first Christians long ago, just after the first Easter. How do we respond?

First of all, we sense however dimly, the sense of joy and wonder that Easter brings. When we speak the Easter greeting *Christ is risen, alleluia! He is risen indeed, alleluia!* it should not and cannot leave us cold. We sense the miracle of the resurrection of the Lord, and we are changed, like Peter and John and the others. The miracle of Easter starts to affect who we are before God. As St Paul puts it in one of his letters:

*If you then have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.....*

Suddenly we find a new centre to our lives, who is the risen and ascended Lord Jesus Christ; who reigns in heaven and calls us to a heavenly life. He is the one who brings forgiveness of sins, yes, but then also the defeat of evil and death itself. And he is the one, who by rising from the dead has opened to way to eternal life to all who believe in him. That changes us, gives us a new reason to live, a new reason for living. The Easter miracle has been taken into us, now brings about a revolution of our very being. Easter offers us a true and deep conversion of all that we are; that is the Easter miracle for us. It happened for Peter and John and the others; and it happens no less to you and me, as we taste even in this life the life of heaven, the gift to Jesus to us through his death, resurrection from the dead, and his ascending into heaven.

### ***Exploring our risen life***

I said a moment ago that the miracle of Easter brings about a conversion of our deepest being. Let's explore that but further. Think about Peter and John going into that temple to pray. At the door there was that lame beggar, seeking money. How easy it would have been just to pass on by, as perhaps Peter and John had done many times before. But this time they stopped, reached out to the lame man, lifted him up, healed him, and sent him on his way rejoicing and praising God. Surely there was a miracle for the lame beggar, but also there was a massive change in Peter and John. That change we could see as courage or faith; but I think that at its heart was the power to love as Jesus loves, unconditionally, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to love with God's love. And that is the change in our own lives that we should open ourselves to – that the Holy Spirit may cause us to love as Jesus loved.

So this miraculous, Easter risen life that you and I are called to is about a moral transformation; to love those the world rejects, to love those who are different from ourselves. When we are tempted to judge someone, and to reject their friendship or withhold ours, let us remember that the arms of Jesus on the cross were stretched out as much for them as for us. For God forgives them as he forgives us, with that forgiveness that flows from Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for the sins of the whole world. And so because God forgives us all alike, so must we, and more than forgive, to love all because God loves us all so much. Easter is about throwing open the doors of heaven; but it is also about throwing open the doors of our lives!

### ***Resolution***

Perhaps today we can think about those beggars at the door that we so often pass by. And make Easter resolutions. And pray for a deepening of the Easter miracle in us; a deepening of the risen life of Jesus in us; so that we are changed more deeply than ever before, to love all for who Jesus opened wide his arms on the cross, all those who share with us the hope of heaven and of eternal life with God. Let us then pray for an explosion of holy love, Easter love in our lives; love for the Lord who loves us; and love for all for whom our Lord died and rose again. As St John the Apostle so truly wrote, *God is love; and those who live in love, live in God, and God lives in them.*