

3rd Sunday of Easter 2018.

Fr. Kalivela

It happened in a remote parish in India. A priest who was assigned newly to the parish was going to a mission on his moped and he lost his way in a forest. It was getting dark and he could not see any town close by. To his relief he found a small hut in the middle of nowhere. The door to the house was half open and through the opening of the door the priest was able to see a lady lying in a bed, a man sitting by her side and two children resting in the arms of the woman. He entered the house and told them that he was a priest and he was going to a mission to celebrate mass and he lost his way. The man in the house told with teary eyes that his wife accidentally fell from a tree and broke her bones. They were praying that she might live at least until a priest comes to anoint her and give communion. The priest celebrated mass in their house, gave communion to the family and anointed the wife. The family praised God for bringing a priest to their house and the priest thanked God for showing him the way to his mission in a little house. The priest was me and it happened in my first assignment as a pastor in a remote parish in India. The family felt the presence of Jesus in the celebration of Mass and in the sacraments. The readings today give us a description about how the disciples felt the presence of Jesus after his resurrection and how St. Peter gave witness to this experience of the Risen Lord.

Today's first reading is taken from the second of five discourses preached by St. Peter. This forceful address astonished the crowd gathered at the Portico of Solomon in the Jerusalem Temple. In this discourse, St. Peter speaks of the Jewish heritage of Christianity, reminding his hearers and us of how the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sent His Son Jesus as the Messiah to save the world and of how His chosen people rejected their Messiah. St. Peter also reports how Jesus was raised from the dead and fulfilled all the Messianic prophecies.

In the Gospel we heard Jesus appearing to his disciples in the closed upper room. This apparition of Jesus took place on Easter evening, after Jesus had appeared to the two disciples of Emmaus. The two disciples to whom Our Lord appeared on their way to Emmaus returned hurriedly to Jerusalem to report the good news that they saw the Lord in person and whom they had recognized in the breaking of the bread. They discovered that the apostles were convinced, by that time, of the resurrection of Jesus because Simon Peter also had seen him. While they were discussing these things, Jesus appeared in their midst, surprising and

terrifying them. This story was told and retold and recorded by Luke for at least three reasons: 1st, to show Jesus' death and Resurrection took place in accordance with the Scriptures; secondly, to show that the risen Jesus is present in the breaking of bread; and thirdly, it is to show that the risen Jesus is also physically absent from the disciples.

By inviting his apostles to look closely at him and touch him, Jesus removed any fear that they had. He instilled confidence in them. He showed that he loved them by greeting: "peace be with you." By eating a piece of cooked fish before their eyes, he convinced them that they were not dreaming or having a mere vision or hallucination. Jesus wanted them to be authentic witnesses to the reality of his life as their risen Lord with his glorified soul and body. "The resurrection community that had experienced Jesus' dying now experienced his risen presence. And it was, quite insistently, an embodied one. This is a Jesus of sight and sound, of memories and relationships, of love and tenderness. He would take food and allow himself to be touched. Even his wounds could be examined. It was a recognizable and identifiable Jesus, a realization of his bodied existence." (Fr. John Kavanaugh; Center for Liturgy).

We need to relive the "Upper Room Experience" in the Holy Mass: The same Jesus who, in the Upper Room, prepared his disciples for their preaching and witnessing mission, is present with us in the Eucharistic celebration. He invites us to share in the "Liturgy of the Word of God" and in "The Liturgy of Bread and Wine." In the first part of the Mass, Jesus speaks to us through the "Word of God." In the second part, He becomes our spiritual food and drink. Thus, today's Gospel scene is repeated every Sunday on our parish altars. Like the early disciples, we come together to repent of our sins, express our thanks for the blessings we have received, listen to God's words and offer ourselves to God on the altar along with our gifts of bread and wine. We also share in the spiritual food Jesus supplies, and we are sent to share his message with the entire world.

Our daily lives need to become the means of experiencing and sharing the risen Lord with others. Just as the disciples experienced their risen Lord in their community, let us learn to recognize the presence of Jesus in our own homes, social service centers, nursing facilities, work places, hospitals and schools. These are also the places where we have the opportunity to convey our peace and joy to others.