

# 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter

## Year B

### *Our Advocate With The Father.*

*We celebrate with the living Christ, our advocate with the Father,  
in whose name repentance for the forgiveness of sins is preached to all the world.*

(Readings: Acts of the Apostles 3: 13-15, 17-19. You killed the prince of life. God, however, raised him from the dead.  
1 John 2: 1-5. He is the sacrifice that takes our sins away, and not only ours, but the whole world's.  
Luke 24: 35-48. So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.)

Imagine for a moment that Our Lord was to suddenly appear this morning; visibly in our midst, right here and now.

And suppose that he walked through those closed church doors, and down the aisle; so close, and so vivid, that we could even see the scars in his hands and feet, and the whole in his side. And imagine a bit further..., that he stayed here with us, say, for a while, talking with us and listening to us. As outlandish unlikely as that all might sound, it would, essentially, be the self-same scene as described in today's Gospel.

A few of his disciples were together, somewhere in Jerusalem, discussing the Lord, and wondering if he might really be alive, when suddenly he walked in among them and spoke to them!

Can you imagine what the risen Lord might say to us if he were with us, here, today, in this church. Well, we are not really qualified to second-guess the mind of the Lord. But drawing on the conversation recorded in our Gospel, we can at least make some reasonable guesses.

I think the first thing he would do, would be to put us at our ease, just as he did with his disciples. His very first sentence to them was, 'Peace be with you!' – And that was the message they so desperately needed to hear. – Not only were they amazed, indeed, 'dumfounded' by his sudden appearance, they were deeply troubled about so many things.

Jesus' death was a traumatic reality; a trauma that had left them crushed and dejected. The sheer cruelty they had witnessed him subjected to made them fearful and anxious for their own safety. They wondered about their future. Where would they go now? What would they do? What *could* they do? How could they pick up the pieces of their now shattered lives after Golgotha?

All of these feelings would have been compounded by a deep sense of personal shame. They all knew, in their own hearts that each and every one of them had been cowards; that they had *all* forsaken their Lord, their friend, when he had most needed them. As well as all of this, they were trying to understand the growing reports of Jesus' Resurrection. All-in-all, they were profoundly disturbed, and Jesus knew it, so he gave them a blessing of peace.

Why should we not suppose that Jesus would deal with us in just the same way? To some degree or another, each of us has come to Mass today with a troubled heart or mind. We are all bothered about so many things, be it our job, money, children, marital or health problems, our personal sins. Added to these are global conditions such as the Pandemic, pollution, world peace, political stability, the starving, the abused, the spiralling decline in the moral fabric of society, and so on.

In this world of ours, it seems we will never run out of things to worry about. Jesus knows this about us, and I think he would deal, first, with what matters most to him... us!

Those among us who fully expect a scolding for our sins would probably be quite relieved, for there is very little record in the Gospels of Jesus scolding anyone. And where there is, it was for the sin of religious hypocrisy.

His very presence made sinners see themselves for who they were, and repent. – He'd deal with us, now, as he did with the disciples, then. The first thing we'd hear him say is that brief but beautiful sentence, 'Peace be with you!' – He would put *us* at ease.

Next, he would start us thinking. Once the inward turmoil of the disciples was at peace, he began to remind them of some of the things he had taught them. And he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures that dealt with the Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of the Messiah.

Whereas they were already convinced he was the Messiah, they had been expecting something quite different. They believed that he was going to establish an *earthly* kingdom, and restore the glory of Israel. Nearly *all* Jews expected that. This is why they were so confounded by his death. They simply couldn't believe that such a thing could happen to the Messiah. But the risen Christ made them think at a far deeper level.

There is no doubt in my mind that he would do the same for us. He would challenge some of *our* pre-conceived ideas and, therein, likewise stimulate *our* minds.

What a wonderful thing it would be, to spend even a little time in the presence of Jesus. Then it could be said of us, 'He opened their minds.' He would set us thinking, just as he did his disciples.

Finally, he would put us to work. Having put his disciples at ease, and having opened their minds, he told them that they had a job to do; to preach 'repentance for the forgiveness of sins'. And their workplace was the whole world, beginning from Jerusalem. He concluded by saying to them, 'You are witnesses to this.'

The risen Christ would say the self-same things to us today.

Admittedly, Jesus is not here with us quite as obviously, not as tangibly visible or audible as he was when his disciples saw him. But make no mistake, he is here, right now, just as he was then!

If we listen to him, he will still our anxious hearts. And he will put us at *our* ease. He will open our minds and stimulate them. And he will send us out into a world, sick with sin and suffering. He will put *us* to work.

The question is simply this, 'Are we prepared to spend some time with Jesus, to let him speak to us, and then, to do as he asked, as his first disciples did?' Or are we content to merely stand around behind closed doors, wondering if he might really be alive?