

3rd Sunday of Easter B

My sisters and brothers in Christ,

All three readings today speak about situations in which people did things and made comments but really did not know what was happening at the spiritual level, at the level where God and our world interact. You and I are like that in our daily lives as well. Often God is at work and we ignore it, or we do not see it, or we refuse to believe it. And then we just go on living but the depths of spiritual possibility have been ignored, missed, or overlooked. God is reaching out to us all the time. We have eyes but see not and ears but hear not.

The first reading is from the Acts of the Apostles and recounts how Saint Peter told the people of his time that they had caused the death of Jesus. Then Saint Peter softens it a little and says that all of this was done out of ignorance. So the challenge is to move from ignorance to knowledge of the Lord Jesus. We must learn to know how God is at work in our lives, even when we may not be aware of it. This is a strong lesson because so many of us today live as if there were no God, even when we may pay homage to God with our lips.

The second reading is from the First Letter of Saint John and speaks about people who proclaim with their mouths that Jesus is Lord but by their actions they make their words into lies. That means, of course, that we can all say that Jesus is Lord but unless we live in a way that proclaims that Jesus is truly Lord of our lives, then our words belie the truth.

This is the same message for all of us: if you and I really believe in God, then our lives have to change and we have to live in such a way that our actions proclaim Christ rather than have words that are empty and meaningless.

The Gospel of Luke, which is given to us today, is the same message again: Christ can appear right in front of our noses and we may still not believe in Him because what He does is so far outside of our normal experiences. He transports us to another realm of existence and He offers us the possibility to grow beyond the limits of our words, our action, our lives.

We can sense in today's Gospel that the disciples want to believe, but to believe asks quite a bit of them because they had seen the Lord Jesus die on the cross. There are so many ways the Lord Jesus can die in our lives! We can let Jesus die in our lives by not praying, by not going to confession regularly instead of once or twice a year, by living in a way that excludes Him from our daily decisions and choices, by treating others and even ourselves immorally and unethically, by ignoring the demands of God in our personal lives, and so on.

As I mentioned earlier, God is always reaching out to us. In a moment of grace Jesus may break through the locked door of our hearts and show us that He is alive and risen—and we can either reject or accept that and try to make sense of it for our lives. We cannot merely give God lip service and still expect to live with Him in eternity. We cannot merely stop by for an hour a week and expect to grow in holiness.***

We are invited to believe in the Lord Jesus today: to believe that He is God, to believe that He rose from the dead, to believe that He loves each and every one of us personally and to believe **that** we must also work to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to all with whom we come in contact each and every day of our lives. For if we do not do this, we who are the Body of Christ, the Church, then Christianity has indeed failed.

Today's Gospel ended with these words: "You are the witnesses of these things."

Go forth and witness that:

Christ is risen! Christ is truly risen. Alleluia, Alleluia! Amen!

- Fr. David M. Chiantella