

2ND SUNDAY OF EASTER 2020

Acts of Apostles 2: 42-47 + Psalm 118 + 1 Peter 1: 3-9 + John 20: 19-31

Holy Spirit Catholic Church: April 19, 2020

When Jesus, risen from the dead, appears to his followers, they do not recognize him at first.

The accounts of his resurrection appearances found in all 4 Gospels have this in common—when he appears, his disciples do not recognize Jesus initially.

So, in that locked upper room the Risen Jesus proves to his stunned followers that it is really him by showing them his wounds.

This is also the proof Thomas looks for—he will believe when he sees the wounds.

The friends of Jesus do not recognize him at first in his risen body until he says something or does something which connects this “new” person with the Jesus of Nazareth they had known and loved.

Why is this so?

Why is Jesus, risen from the dead, not recognized by those closest to him?

Because he is living a new life, a resurrected life---he is a new person.

Many people think of resurrection in terms of resuscitation,

like Lazarus being resuscitated from the tomb and given his old life back.

That is not what happened in the resurrection of Jesus.

He is radically changed by the experience of his suffering, death, and resurrection.

The Risen Lord Jesus does not start his old life over where he left off before his death on the cross.

Rather, he is living a new life, reflected in a new, glorified, resurrected body.

Even though his glorified body still carries the wounds of his suffering and death, this new Risen body of Jesus is different from his old earthly body,

The Risen Lord Jesus still comes into places where people are locked away in fear to share His Risen Life, to breathe upon his followers the breath of new life.

Risen life, resurrected life by its nature cannot be contained---it has to be shared.

That’s what the Risen Lord is still doing today,

sharing His risen life with us during this Easter Season.

He comes to us, locked away in our homes, fearful of catching the virus or spreading it.

The first gift of Risen Life is Peace---a peace flowing from the wounds of the Risen Lord into our lives and into the world.

He says to each of us today, "*Peace be with you*".

This gift of His peace flows into our anxious minds and fearful hearts, into our bodies weighed down by worry,

We live out of this peace, from this "deep knowing" of faith, which sustains our hope even in difficult times, because we know the Risen Lord by the power of His Spirit walks by our side.

He has not abandoned us, nor will He ever do so.

We breathe deeply of His life-giving Spirit, the Spirit which dwells within us by baptism, and enter ever deeper into the new life the Risen Jesus offers us.

As we encounter the Risen Lord in his life-giving word today, we are invited to walk into this new life, to live in a new way, in a "resurrected" way. Many people long to return to life as they knew it before the coronavirus pressed a huge "Pause Button" on life.

Many want to go back to their "normal" life.

But the Risen Jesus invites us into something more than life as it was, something more than our old life.

He is inviting us into a new life with Him today, to leave behind our old way of living. Will we respond to this invitation of the Risen Lord to new life with him?

Some believers have already entered into this new way of living, which they hope to carry over after this crisis comes to an end.

As they have left behind their old life with its manic busyness, they have discovered truths which they want to hold onto and live from.

During this time of sheltering at home, some have begun a new life of prayer or strengthened their former life of prayer.

This crisis has forced them to recognize that the most important relationship in their life is with the Risen Lord, so they have entered more regularly into solitude and into silence, listening to Him like never before.

During this time, others have discovered resurrected life by reconnecting with loved ones, reaching out to neighbors, or extending themselves in service of strangers.

They have rediscovered that the way God made us is to be connected to others.

For the truth is that we are interconnected, that what we choose to do or not do impacts the lives of others for good or for ill.

The Risen Lord, speaking to us in a new way in prayer and through our desire to connect with others, also invites us to examine our attachments to material things.

During this time, many have discovered what is essential and what is not essential. We do not need to keep consuming more and more material things in order to live meaningful lives.

Like the apostles filled with the new life the Risen Lord breathed into them, we have a deeper desire to share our material belongings, even our hard-earned cash, with those who are in need.

Entering into this new life with the Risen Lord, our eyes have been opened to see how much inequality there is in our nation and in our world. This pandemic has brought to light this harsh truth—a small percentage of people in our nation and world have too much of the world's resources and many people have so little.

Access to health care is but one example of this harsh truth.

Those who do not have health insurance have become sicker over the years and more prone to die from the coronavirus.

They are also more likely not to seek out health care if they do catch this dreaded disease because they cannot pay for it.

Minimum wage workers in our country who work in grocery stores, nursing homes, and meat packing plants put their lives at risk, because to cease working means no food for their families and possible eviction from their homes.

New life with the Risen Lord means desiring to share this life with those in need and to correct the glaring inequalities in our world, to work for justice for all.

Joined to the Risen Christ, we are raised above our previous way of life.

As we move with the Lord from death to new life, we die to self-preservation and rise up to self-giving love.

We move from the city where the love of self closes itself off to God to a new city where love gives of itself and thereby finds God. (*cf Augustine, "City of God"*)

Raised up to new life in Him and with Him, Christians bring this Good News, the Gospel of Christ, into the world and raise up humankind to their highest dignity: to be children of God.

The Risen Lord Jesus is knocking from inside the doors of the Church,
desiring to go out into the world.

He desires to go out into the world through the lives of Christians
who carry his self-sacrificing love into the world.

For the way to live a resurrected life in the here and now
is by dying to self with Him and giving our lives away in loving service to others.

Fr. Joseph A. Jacobi