

Luke 24:36b-48^{v vi}

Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.

He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." [And

when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.] While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence. Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled."

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

^v About the Gospel: Luke 24:36b-48

By showing the marks of the crucifixion, the risen Christ identifies himself as the earthly Jesus. He shows himself to be "really real," not a vision or a ghost. The account displays the Hebrew understanding of the person as particular and embodied, in contrast to the Greek sense of the person as merely the "soul."

As in the Emmaus story, the disciples recognize Jesus in the context of a meal and in the exposition of the scriptures. The Hebrew scriptures are divided into three parts: the law, the prophets and the writings (the first book being the Psalms).

To the earlier statement that the scriptures told of the suffering and resurrection of the Messiah (24:25-27) is added that the scriptures also point toward the mission "to all nations" (v. 47). The accomplishment of Jesus' mission to Israel means the beginning of his followers' mission to the Gentiles.

^{vi} Reflection and Response

They still don't get it, even after the stone was rolled away, the cloths folded, the corpse vanished, the angel appeared and various testimonies given. Even then they think he's a ghost. Their reaction is panic and fright.

And Jesus reaches out to them, exactly where they are. No scolding. No abstract theology. Jesus communicates on the only plane that will work. They might be spooked if he touched them. So he invites them to touch him. Drawing them out further, he asks for something to eat.

Nothing could better confirm Jesus' identity and cement his bond with his friends than the sharing of fish. That is, after all, how it all began: an interruption when they were casting their nets, an invitation to a totally different kind of fishing. He who had no need of nourishment satisfies their hunger, that unspoken yearning which lurked beneath their fear, the quavering hope that he might be real.

This time, they get it. In Acts, Peter speaks to the people in a tone that echoes Jesus' voice: no condemnation, only words of peace and forgiveness. He has full confidence that their turning to God will wipe out their sins. Like his master, he does not burden them with heavy dogmas or abstract philosophy. He reaches out to them with the same enthusiasm that Christ once reached toward him. Peter and John have the same tough-minded attitude toward sin that Jesus had. They do not deny it, nor do they allow it to overwhelm them. They place it under God's mercy.

Peter and John had seen human evil in its worst form. They had witnessed the cruel betrayal and violent murder of God. Yet Peter believed that through the Messiah's suffering, God's promise of life would come to fulfillment. And John saw Jesus as an intercessor, an offering for our sins. When we get depressed about evil in the world, or become guilty about our own sin, they inspire us to take the next step, beyond the muck and into new life.

Quietly consider:

When has a meal been an important part of a relationship for me?

What does the meal in today's gospel suggest about the Eucharist?