



Bringing Home the Word



Third Sunday of Easter

April 19, 2015

A Slightly Frightening Experience

By Janel Esker

The word witness can be a little scary. Witnesses to an accident often have to see and talk about unpleasant or tragic happenings. Serving as a witness in a court case can be intimidating as lawyers pose challenging questions and expect the full truth to be told. Even those who have given “witness talks” on a retreat or at the end of Mass would probably admit to some trepidation about speaking publicly about one’s faith and commitment to Christ.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus calls those gathered around him witnesses. Imagine

being that kind of witness—among the first people to experience Jesus after his resurrection. The Gospel first describes those gathered as startled, terrified, and doubting, but then later as incredulous with joy. Jesus showed them his wounds, ate in front of them, and explained the Scriptures to them. Perhaps the experience would have been slightly frightening at first, but imagine the exultation they felt as they witnessed Jesus real and alive among them. Quite a different experience than testifying as a court witness, for sure.

But though we weren’t among those privileged few, we still are witnesses to Jesus’s real presence alive among us today. Certainly we experience Jesus most profoundly in the Eucharist we celebrate together. But we also can recognize him when others reach out to touch our wounds or when forgiveness occurs between relatives or friends who have suffered a rift. He is present when we feed hungry people and give generously to those in much greater need than ourselves.

Jesus didn’t stop being real, alive, and present back in the times of the Gospel. He is present with us now—if we open our eyes to recognize him. Do we feel that same incredulous joy when we witness him in our midst? †

REFLECTION
QUESTIONS

ONE? TWO?
REFLECTION

- When do I find it hard to tell and live the truth?
- Where in my life do I lack initiative?

PRAYER

Risen Lord, your
resurrection revealed
to the world the
hope and promise of
new life. Help me to
be a faithful, hopeful,
loving presence to all
people.

Sunday Readings

Acts of the Apostles 3:13–15, 17–19

God has glorified his servant Jesus, the author of life you put to dead. You acted out of ignorance, now repent and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away.

1 John 2:1–5a

If anyone does son, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ. He is expiation for our sins. Those who say they know Him but do not keep his commandments are liars.

Luke 24:35–48

Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of bread. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.

Jesus—Lover of the Poor

By John P. Fahey Guerra, CSsR

What can the poor teach us about Easter and the message of Jesus's resurrection? As we face this question, I would like to reflect on a Scripture text that my experience brings to mind. It is from the Gospel of John and recounts the story of the doubting Thomas, in which the disciple refuses to believe unless he can put his finger into Jesus' nail marks and his hand into Jesus' wounded side (20:24–29).

Rather than think about our reflection in terms of “what the poor teach us about Easter,” I would suggest that the Easter event is the forming of relationships around the experience of Jesus's risen life. What we are being taught is a way of relating to those whom Jesus reached out to and loved in his life of ministry, namely, the poor. In our relationship with the poor we get in touch with the experience of Easter. We now turn to the story of the doubting Thomas.

In John's Gospel, there is an encounter with the empty tomb and a first appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, who makes the initial announcement to the gathered disciples. In the evening of that same day, Jesus appears in their midst. The Evangelist tells us that Jesus greets them with peace, shows them his hands and his side, breathes the Spirit upon them, and sends them forth with a



message of reconciliation (20:19–23). After this encounter with the risen Lord, the Scripture tells us that Thomas (also called “the twin”) was not with them when Jesus appeared. Upon hearing the announcement of their experience of the risen Jesus, Thomas makes an amazing declaration of his own, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe” (20:25).

Thomas's statement clearly indicates a need for his conversion. Indeed, he wants to define the content of the experience (rendered personally) while omitting the context (the community) of the experience that makes belief possible. In this story, conversion is a movement from being “apart from” to

being “together with.” Whatever ideas Thomas had about a desired relationship with Jesus, nothing is ever going to happen without a relationship with the community Jesus is forming. To call Thomas “the twin” signifies his need for relationship.

Now we can look at our conversion and our relationship with the poor. We normally think of conversion as a personal process that one must undergo. For many of us, it is an internal reworking of our way of thinking and acting that takes place within the confines of our individual selves. Of course, conversion involves internal work and a personal appropriation of the content of belief. However, as the story clearly reveals, being together with others makes possible our movement toward faith.

Similar to Thomas, we think and act in isolation from the poor. Because we are not in a relationship with them, we are free to decide our feelings, attitudes, and actions toward the poor without having an experience of them as people. The poor challenge our faith. We cannot ignore poverty and the poor or try to explain them away.

Jesus brings the message of peace and reconciliation, not to isolated individuals, but within the context of community. “Separation from” the poor to a “together with” the poor is a sign of our conversion. As the Scripture says, “The disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them.”

WEEKDAY READINGS April 20–25

Mon.	Easter Weekday, Acts 6:8–15 / John 6:22–29	Fri.	Easter Weekday (St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, Priest and Martyr), Acts 9:1–20 / John 6:52–59
Tues.	Easter Weekday (St. Anselm, Bishop and Doctor of the Church), Acts 7:51–8:1a / John 6:30–35	Sat.	Feast of St. Mark, Evangelist, / Peter 5:5b–14 / Mark 16:15–20
Wed.	Easter Weekday, Acts 8:1b–8 / John 6:35–40		
Thurs.	Easter Weekday (St. George, Martyr; St. Adalbert, Bishop and Martyr), Acts 8:26–40 / John 6:44–51		

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