

Second Sunday of Easter
Year A

Acts 2:14a, 22-32

Psalm 16

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

What do we need to be convinced of the Resurrection? We see in the New Testament that there were many answers to this question. It is still a relevant question today for some people. Is it an easy question for anyone to answer?

In the gospels and in Acts, we read about people who had different encounters with the resurrected Jesus. In each case, there was initial doubt. But, something in that encounter made them believe that Jesus had actually risen from the dead and was present with them.

The first such incident, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and found it empty. She was confused and distraught. She asked the first person she met where the body had been moved to. She was convinced that Jesus was dead, but the body had just been moved to another location. It was only when Jesus spoke her name did she believe that He was alive and standing in front of her. She needed to hear His voice.

Two disciples were on the road out to Emmaus when they encountered a stranger who appeared to be clueless about all that had happened in Jerusalem. As they walked along, this stranger told them all that had needed to happen. Then, as they convinced this stranger to stay with them as it was late, their eyes were opened when Jesus broke the bread and gave it to them. They needed that Eucharistic experience.

Later, Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room. They had locked themselves in out of fear that they might be next. They did not understand what the women had told them. They could not accept the fact that Jesus might be alive. When Jesus did appear, they were shocked and afraid. Were they seeing a ghost? It was only when Jesus showed them His wounds that they believed and rejoiced. They needed that tangible evidence.

Thomas was not with them on that occasion. He needed to see and touch the wounds of Jesus before he would believe. As our Gospel reading this morning tells us, his opportunity came a week later when, gathered again in the upper room, Jesus appeared and offered Thomas the opportunity to touch His wounds. Then, Thomas was able to believe.

In the reading from Acts, we see Peter addressing a great crowd in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. They had gathered from all over the Roman Empire to worship on this great feast of the Jews. As Peter explained all that had happened to those who had witnessed it and to those who probably had never heard of Jesus because they lived so far away, he was able to tell them that what they saw and heard that day was a result of the activities of God through the Holy Spirit. Some 3000 people believed that day. They needed to hear the message in their own language from people who had obviously never studied their language.

Finally, we come to Paul. He was convinced that all of this was wrong and he set about persecuting all who believed the truth of the resurrection. It was as he was heading to Damascus to continue his efforts there that God knocked him to the ground and he heard a voice from heaven. He needed a dramatic incident to convince him of the reality of the resurrection.

What does it take to convince us? Most of us have been raised in the church and have been taught this truth all our lives. But there are many who live around us who have never heard the story and, therefore, do not understand what we get excited about at Easter. They hear “He is risen” but don’t really understand the significance of it. How can we witness to them about this event and its significance for us and them?

Just inviting people to join us in church is not enough because we don’t really explain it in our services. However, if we can share with them how we have experienced the risen Jesus in our own lives, that is a message that can be understood. Each of us has a story to tell. For some, it is how we have experienced Jesus in our daily lives – just knowing He is with us gives us comfort and strength. For others, the story is more dramatic – be it healing from cancer or helping us turn our lives around when we were flailing around for help.

Whatever our story might be, God is calling us to share that story with others. It is not our wonderful, historical worship that will draw people in. It is not the music we sing or the preaching that will bring people in. It is the heartfelt stories of each of us – how the resurrected Jesus has made a difference in our lives that will entice people to join us. Let us all be open to telling our story to those we meet.