



GOSPEL GOSSIP

St Luke 24. 36-48

Jesus said, Peace be with you

Sunday 14 April

It's hardly surprising, is it, that the disciples should be terrified when Jesus, who had been dead and buried, suddenly appeared in their midst. Nor is it surprising that they might think he was a ghost. Today we might call such an appearance as a post-death apparition, when the deceased can appear to loved ones in their grief. But such an explanation would not have occurred to those disciples: Jesus was dead, so he couldn't be with them.

As usual, Jesus' reaction is one of compassion. He doesn't express any frustration or dismay that his closest friends, whom he had prepared, should not accept his resurrection, even after all he had been through. He seeks to reassure them, 'Peace be with you' and further emphasise his reality by asking for, and eating, a piece of fish. These are not actions of a ghost.

- Have you ever experienced the appearance of a loved one, perhaps immediately after their death?
- If you have, how would you explain it?
- Would such an appearance comfort or alarm?
- What would it take for you to accept such an appearance?
- Does it have any meaning?

After Jesus had satisfied his disciples that was real and no phantasm, he then went on to explain to them how and why his resurrection was possible. Like with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, he began with scripture, reminding them what he had told them before his death, and then, relating the events which had so disturbed them to the prophecies of old, with which as practising Jews, they would have been familiar, ending with the challenge that they, the disciples, were witnesses to all this.

Today we might regret that we don't not have the risen Christ physically in our presence in order to satisfy those doubts of ours which are the same as the disciples'. However, let us remember that the disciples were the first to encounter the risen Lord. We are looking back at 2000 years of history, tradition and faith. We can put Jesus' death and resurrection into biblical context far more easily, because we are looking back. Our doubts can be reassured by the faith of all those countless Christians before us and in our midst today. Yet, also, we are being challenged by Jesus to be 'martyrs' – witnesses – to the faith that we experience. Faith is not something to be hoarded but shared.

- Can you relate the Easter events to the Old Testament?
- Does this make things easier (not easy!) to understand and believe?
- Is the risen Christ to be found in scripture?
- In what other ways may you encounter the risen Christ?
- How do you bear witness today?

Jesus is aware and knows that any meeting with him can disconcert, perhaps even scare. Wherever we are, whoever we are, his are words of compassion, not censure, when we recognise him. He gives us the chance today to understand how all the Easter events were not only possible, but essential. Just like the disciples, we can understand this through scripture. We can accept all this more easily as part of a body, the Church, and as individuals and as a Church, we must bear witness to our faith in our lives today.