



**Contributed by Fr. James M. Donohue, C.R.**

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**THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER**  
**April 18, 2021**

**GATHERING TIME** (10-15 Minutes)

**Introduction to the Word:**

Things are not always as they appear. When I was in Tanzania, there was a man I encountered whenever I would go to the city of Morogoro to get food and supplies. He wore the same brown shirt and pants with no shoes. He looked like he badly needed a shower. I could see that he had some mental/emotional challenges. Whenever he would see our Resurrectionist van, he would wait by the van until I returned from shopping. When he saw me, he would put out his hand and stare at me. When I gave him some money, he would never say anything. He would simply turn and walk away. I became increasingly irritated that he kept finding me and never said "thank you." I cannot tell you exactly what happened one day, but suddenly I saw him differently. I realized that he was the face of Christ and that I was an absolute jerk. It struck me how I was expecting this poor, intellectually challenged man to be grateful for my small actions of charity. I was embarrassed that I had approached this situation with this "mental image" and promised myself that I would do better. Every time I saw him after this "awakening" I tried to treat him differently. I would look him in the eye and I would smile and ask how he was in Swahili. Once he smiled back (I think it was because I gave him more money than usual that day!). But that was fine. I saw in his smile the smile of Christ that said, "Jim, you still have a long way to go to see as I see."

**Warm-up Activity:** (about 8 – 10 minutes)

Things do not always appear as they are. Can you think of a time when you had everything “figured out” only to discover that things were not quite like you thought? Can you identify what happened to make you think differently? What effect did this have on you? On others?

**The Table of the Word**

Things are not always as they appear. In the gospel, the Risen Jesus asks His disciples for some food. In the Greek it is phrased: “You give me something to eat.” Interestingly, this is a similar demand that Jesus gave the disciples earlier in Luke’s gospel when the disciples wanted to send the crowds away without eating. Here Jesus said, “You give them something to eat.” In this earlier passage, Luke had described the crowds as in need of healing. Now the Risen Jesus shows the disciples His wounds and asks them to feed Him. The Risen Jesus identifies with the hungry and the wounded. He asks us to continue to feed Him in our outreach to others.

**Penitential Rite:** The Lord Jesus calls us to be witnesses of the Resurrection.

**Lord Jesus**, you are the source of goodness and life, bringing peace and hope, we pray,  
Lord, have mercy ... **Lord, have mercy**

**Christ Jesus**, you fill us with renewed Easter joy to share our new life with others, we  
pray, Christ, have mercy ... **Christ, have mercy**

**Lord Jesus**, you call us to bear witness to you in all we say and do, we pray, Lord, have  
mercy ... **Lord, have mercy**

Let us pray:

Fill us with Easter joy, Lord God,  
and help us to bear witness to the resurrection of Your Son.  
We have experienced Your unconditional love.  
We have been saved through the death of Your Son, and share in His life.  
Give us courage to share what we have seen,  
what we have heard and what we have experienced.  
May our daily lives also bear witness to that life of God in us,  
too great a gift to keep to ourselves.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus, of whom we are witnesses.  
Amen.

**SCRIPTURE REFLECTION TIME**

*(As Christians we believe that the **WORD** of God we hear proclaimed each Sunday is an empowering Word, and that God is present in the Word proclaimed. This is the Word that God wants us to hear today. The dynamic of the Small Christian Community, namely, reflecting on our life-story within the context of this Word, and sharing the insights of these reflections, is such that God’s Spirit becomes present, and the gifts of the Spirit are experienced as empowering and life-giving.)*

**FIRST READING:** (Acts 3:13-15, 17-19)

At the temple gate, Peter addressed the people: “The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him.

“But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

“And now, brothers and sisters, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the Prophets, that his Christ would suffer. Repent, therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.”

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**SECOND READING:** (1 John 2:1-5)

I am writing this, my children, to stop you sinning; but if anyone should sin, we have our advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, who is just; he is the sacrifice that takes our sins away, and not only ours, but the whole world’s. We can be sure that we know God only by keeping his commandments. Anyone who says, “I know him,” and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, refusing to admit the truth. But when anyone does obey what he has said, God’s love comes to perfection in him.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL:** (Luke 24:35-48)

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

The disciples told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognized Jesus at the breaking of bread. They were still talking about all this when He Himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you!” In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, “Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.” And as He said this He showed them His hands and feet. Their joy was so great that they still could not believe it, and they stood there dumbfounded; so he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” And they offered Him a piece of grilled fish which He took and ate before their eyes. Then He told them, “This what I meant when I said, while I am still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms, has to be fulfilled.” He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and He said to them, “So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in His name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

*Pause for a brief reflection on the scripture readings.*

## COMMENTARY:

(Allow about 5 – 10 minutes for the participants to react to the *Commentary* to identify a newly discovered insight or idea.)

**First Reading:** Things are not always as they appear. To the religious leaders in the Gospel, it looked as though it were a “wise move” to stir the crowd to release Barabbas. In fact, it seems that Pilate miscalculated his ability to outmaneuver the religious authorities. Pilate’s solution was to suggest the release of Jesus instead of the intended person, Barabbas. Pilate thought he had the ideal solution: this would enable him to release the one he thought was innocent, while keeping Barabbas in prison. However, it seems that Pilate miscalculated and underestimated by far the energy with which the Jewish officials were pursuing Jesus’ execution. With increased pressure, Pilate gives in to the political power and, as Peter says in the Acts of the Apostles, “You killed the Author of life.” But, this is not the end of the story, for God has raised Jesus from the dead, and through this act, offers new life, even to those who wanted the death of Jesus.

### Second Reading:

Things are not always as they appear. Sin leads to destruction and death. Sin is the destroyer of relationships with others and God—and even within ourselves, as we betray the very core of our being. Sin can distort and deceive, making us love what we should hate. But with the death and resurrection of Jesus, sin has been overcome and destroyed. Through His suffering and death, Jesus has absorbed the sin of the world. On behalf of all humanity, He has given Himself totally over to the Father’s will, trusting in God’s goodness and God’s plan. Unlike Adam, Jesus “did not grasp equality with God, but rather emptied himself” and “because of this God has greatly exalted Him and given Him the name above all names” (Phil 2). The new Adam has created fresh possibilities because God’s love continues to summon us to repent.

### Gospel:

Things are not always as they appear. At the time of Jesus, many thought that the Messiah meant that a descendant of King David would restore the kingship that had been lost during the Babylonian captivity. The hope was that the Messiah would overturn the Roman rule of Israel. In Luke’s gospel, Jesus’ trial hinges on trying to get Jesus to say that He is the Messiah because of the implications this would have for those who thought in this way. If Jesus admits that He is the Messiah, then He clearly would be seditious, working against Caesar. Even though He is innocent, they still charge Him in this way. However, this is not how Jesus thinks about His identity as the Messiah. Three events after His death clarify who Jesus is as the Messiah. First, the angels at the tomb speak to the women: “Remember what He said to you while He was still in Galilee—that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and be crucified, and rise on the third day” (Lk 24:6-7). Second, to the disciples on the road to Emmaus: “How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory? Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them what referred to Him in all the scriptures” (Lk 24:25-27). Third, to the disciples gathered together: “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 and in the prophets and 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 would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day”” (Lk 24:44-46). What seems to be an utter failure, an unsuccessful mission, and an absolute catastrophe is actually the path to resurrection and the salvation of the world. What looked like the end to the disciples is now the

beginning, for now the disciples are to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion:**

**1. “We are witnesses” (Acts 3:13-15, 17-19)**

In this Easter season, we read in the Acts of the Apostles how the disciples of Christ bore witness to Him. They put themselves at risk in preaching the Good News, and continuing the ministry of Christ.

- a) Is there a particular part of the Acts that has touched you, and motivated you to be a witness?
- b) How did they react to the indifference, rejection or hostility that they experienced?
- c) How have you “repented and turned to God” during this Easter season (in particular)?

**2. “God’s love comes to perfection in him.” (1 John 2:1-5)**

This phrase reminds us that salvation is “God’s doing.” The forgiveness of sins is a pure gift on the part of God in Christ Jesus. Being open to forgiveness allows not only the forgiveness of sins, but union with God through God’s grace working within us. This is how we will “know God.”

- a) Can you identify a moment when your words or actions may have led the Lord to say, “I don’t know you?”
- b) Can you identify a moment when your words or actions have led the Lord to say, “I know you?”

**3. “You are witnesses to this.” (Luke 24:35-48)**

In our human condition, we often have doubts, and seek ‘proof’ of what we believe. The disciples did the same!

- a) Putting yourself in the place of the disciples, would you have been agitated, and with doubt?
- b) Can you think of a time when you were agitated and doubtful?
- c) How did the Lord’s peace influence your agitation and doubt?

## **CARING - PRAYING TIME**

**1. Word for the Week: “Things are not always as they appear.”**

**2. Suggestions for the Week:**

This week, this Third Week of the Easter season, the Risen Lord is asking you to be His witness. It will not be on a stand in court, before a judge. It will not be on a street corner, or from a pulpit. You will bear witness – as you always do – without even recognizing it sometimes. This week, make a special effort to bear witness to others by what you say and do. The Lord is counting on you! Be more conscious in each conversation, in each encounter, that this is an opportunity to bear witness to Jesus Christ. It is a chance to encourage love, forgiveness, peace, patience and compassion. Not only will your words bear witness, but your peaceful confidence and your acts of charity. After all, you do have something to share, because you have seen, heard and experienced the love, truth, and power of God.

### 3. **Intercessions:**

In this Easter season we experience the grace of the Lord's resurrection in a unique and special way. The liturgy of the Church brings us the Word of God, with the witness of the early Church in the Acts of the Apostles, and the life and ministry of Jesus in the gospels, in particular in His resurrection appearances. Let us pray: **He is Risen!**

FOR THE CHURCH, that all those outside the fold, for whom Jesus laid down his life, may be gathered into the one flock of the one Shepherd, we pray...

FOR THE WORLD, that those who control the destinies of nations may act as responsible stewards of the power and people entrusted to their care, we pray...

FOR THOSE OPPRESSED, AFFLICTED OR IN NEED, that society's marginalized ones may be known and defended by Christians as God's own, worthy of dignity and respect, we pray...

FOR THE NEOPHYTES, that those newly baptized into the one flock of the Lord may rejoice and grow in the salvation that is theirs, we pray...

FOR THE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY, that we who know and are known by the Good Shepherd may gladly welcome into his flock all who will listen to the Lord's voice, we pray...

FOR OUR FAMILIES AND FAITH COMMUNITIES, that we may be enriched by our words and actions, we pray ...

FOR OURSELVES, that we may be faithful witnesses to the risen life of Jesus, and be sources of hope to all we meet, we pray ...

FOR THOSE IN FEAR AND DOUBT, that they may turn to the Lord and experience His peace, we pray ...

FOR THE DEAD, that all the departed who were God's children by baptism may become God's reborn in eternal life, we pray...

FOR POPE FRANCIS' INTENTION: We pray for those who risk their lives while fighting for fundamental rights under dictatorships, authoritarian regimes and even in democracies in crisis, we pray...

#### **And how can we help you in prayer this week?**

Let us pray:

O Risen Lord,

the Way, the Truth, and the Life:

Make us faithful followers of the spirit of your resurrection.

Grant that we may be inwardly renewed,

dying to yourselves so that you may live in us.

May our lives serve as signs of the transforming power of your love.

Use us as your instruments for the renewal of society,

bringing your life and love to all,

and leading them to your Church.

This we ask of you, Lord Jesus,

living and reigning with God the Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

With hands and hearts united in gratitude for God's favours toward us today, we pray that all those in our influence be moved to be open to your Word and your Spirit, while we say as one, **OUR FATHER ...**

**Celebrating the Word:** A Ministry of the Congregation of the Resurrection Ontario-Kentucky Province (including the former Resurrection Centre), 265 Westmount Road North, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G7. ([Celebrating the Word](#) was founded by Father Frank Ruetz, C.R., deceased 2012). For information: Website: [www.resurrectionists.ca](http://www.resurrectionists.ca) E-mail: [provincialoffice@resurrectioncollege.ca](mailto:provincialoffice@resurrectioncollege.ca) The Scripture version used in this commentary is the [New Revised Standard Version](#) (copyrighted by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA).