

What I love about today's Gospel account is its sheer realism. If you notice, what's the immediate reaction of the Apostles to seeing the risen Jesus? Is it overwhelming joy and excitement? *No, actually it's not*—not initially at least. St. Luke tells us that the Apostles "...were *startled and terrified* and thought that they were seeing a ghost." So if you've ever wondered whether or not the Apostles believed in ghosts, there you go!

But this is such a realistic account in that the Apostles' reaction to the risen Jesus is *so human*, because let's be honest: if one of us saw a deceased loved one appear to us in the flesh, I think we'd be a little startled and terrified like the Apostles, right? Like "what is going on?!"

Brothers and sisters, what I'm getting at here is that if you've ever struggled to accept the Resurrection, if you've ever doubted the Resurrection and just struggled to wrap your mind around it, *you're not alone*, because guess what: *the Apostles* struggled to accept it! *Initially*, the Apostles *doubted* and couldn't believe the Resurrection! *And they were Jesus' closest friends and most devoted followers* who witnessed Jesus raising people from the dead and performing all of these amazing

miracles in His public ministry, and yet they *still* struggled to accept the mysterious reality of the Resurrection, which was the “miracle of all miracles” that absolutely *proved the divinity of Christ!*

In fact, St. Luke tells us in today’s Gospel that after seeing and touching the wounds of Jesus’ crucifixion, the Apostles were “*still incredulous* for joy and were amazed” meaning that they were *still unwilling to believe what they were seeing* and they just couldn’t believe it. Now remember, these were Jesus’ closest friends who *mostly abandoned Him* out of fear during His trial and crucifixion. And so when the risen Jesus appeared to them, these men were hiding out in petrified terror, afraid that the Romans and the Jewish Sanhedrin were coming for them and that they were going to be arrested at any time and suffer the same horrible fate as their leader.

So what does the risen Christ say to these *already* terrified men? “Peace be with you. Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.” So the risen Jesus wanted to show the Apostles the wounds of His crucifixion and death as the *clearest proof* that He was physically there

in their presence and that He's the same guy who was tortured and killed on the cross. By showing the Apostles His wounds and then eating some baked fish in their presence, Jesus is basically demonstrating to them that He's not a ghost or some crazy figment of their imagination or some product of any self-deluded wishful thinking. Rather Jesus wanted to lovingly reassure His Apostles that He is *truly risen* and that this was the *greatest reality* they could ever encounter.

Brothers and sisters, whenever we read the Gospels, which are the written and inspired Word of God, not only are we reading about certain historical events that happened thousands of years ago, but we're also listening to God Who speaks *directly and personally to us in our own lives*. Now I don't know exactly what is going on in everyone's lives here, but whatever suffering or struggles you may be experiencing, whatever sins you are striving to avoid and overcome, whatever crosses you may be carrying, whatever challenges or problems you may be facing, whether it's at home or work or whether it's regarding yourself, family, friends, co-workers, etc.

Whatever fears and doubts you might have or whatever might be plaguing your heart and mind at this time, *whatever it might be*: know that our crucified and risen Savior comes to you *right here, right now* in *this Mass* and lovingly speaks to *you personally* the *same Heavenly* words that He spoke to His terrified Apostles who were hiding out in total fear almost 2,000 years ago: “Peace be with you. Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.”

Brothers and sisters, the wounds of Jesus’ glorified, risen body constitute the evidence of God’s supreme victory over all of the darkness in our lives, over our own death, over all of our sins, our suffering, our fears and doubts, over all of the forces of evil in this world. As Prophet Isaiah powerfully said, “By *His wounds*, we are healed.” In our crucified and risen Savior Jesus Christ, the *victory is ours* over any evil and suffering that might plague and threaten us.

Brothers and sisters, our crucified and risen Savior *is* the answer to all of our prayers. In the midst of our problems, our suffering, and our fears, the risen Lord is constantly pleading with us out of love saying,

“Trust in Me. Have faith in Me. Let me carry you, help you, guide you, sanctify you, strengthen you, and heal you.” He *is* the Way, the Truth, and the Life! He *is* our eternal hope! He is the cure for our sinfulness and the One Who sets us free from all of our fears and doubts, all of our worries, uncertainties, and anxieties. And the best part is, ***He is not far from us***, but rather we encounter our crucified and risen Lord most wonderfully in His Catholic Church and Her sacraments, ***especially*** in the Most Holy Eucharist!

So as we prepare to worship and receive our crucified and risen Lord, let’s lovingly abandon ourselves to Him and entrust all of our problems, struggles, temptations, crosses, fears, doubts, and suffering to Him, knowing with great confidence that ***through Him, with Him, and in Him***, the ultimate victory is ours!