



THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

CYCLE B

Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

1 John 2:1-5a

Luke 24:35-48

GATHERING

(A white sheet arranged to suggest burial wrappings rests on the floor of the gathering place. A cross made of bare tree branches, tied with twine and decorated with fresh spring flowers is laid over the wrapping cloth. A bowl of freshly dug, rich earth from the garden and some unlit candles complete the environment.)

This week we celebrate God's affirmation of all creation in and through the resurrection of his Son. Last week we saw that communities, whether neighborhood or parish, are built up when behaviors and attitudes are changed because people come together to work, to help, to heal, to share. How have you been a helping, healing, sharing presence in your parish/neighborhood this past week? *(Members share briefly.)*

OPENING PRAYER

(Members join in singing, "Invocation", The song may be found on the Internet.. The leader lights the candles and calls the community to silent acknowledgment of God's presence.)

Leader: Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God:

All: God touches all God made. Everything is full of sacred presence.

Leader: But only he who sees, takes off his shoes –
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries,

All: God touches all God made. Everything is full of sacred presence.

Leader: And daub their natural faces unaware
More and more from the first similitude.

All: God touches all God made. Everything is full of sacred presence.

Leader: If a man could feel,
Not one day, in the artist's ecstasy,
But every day, feast, fast, or working-day,
The spiritual significance burn through

The hieroglyphic of material shows,
Henceforward he would pain the globe with wings,
And reverence fish and fowl, the bull, the tree,
And even his very body as a man ...

All: God touches all God made. Everything is full of sacred presence.

Amen. Alleluia.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, (1806-1861)

(A selection of instrumental music played.)

Focus Question

On which of your senses do you especially rely?

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

(The scriptures are read aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the gospel, the facilitator invites members to mention a word, a phrase or an image from one of the readings that particularly struck them this week. Members then go on to read over the commentary and consider the questions in silence for several minutes before entering into conversation.)

Commentary

It is really satisfying to read a mystery story whose surprise ending is cryptically present from the very beginning. The reader sits amazed, pondering the outcome and realizing that all through the twists and turns of the story, the clues have been offered smoothly, subtly, and deftly. With dawning awareness and admiration for the intelligence, design and surpassing artistry of the author, the reader can only whisper, “Of course! I should have guessed! Now I see it!”

As Luke proclaims the mystery of the resurrection in today’s gospel he celebrates the mystery of the Incarnation as well. The Feast of Christmas is triumphant in the celebration of Easter. The whole created world shimmers in the reflected light of Jesus’ resurrection. Today’s gospel insists on *enfleshed graciousness* as God’s gift and truth. Jesus says, “See me, touch me, feed me, hear me! It is I. Know me in my flesh, different now, but somehow the same.”

Jesus addresses his disciples, faint with fear and then drunk with joy. He instructs them to look back and remember. Remember the Torah. Remember in Genesis that God spoke. From the beginning God’s word was *incarnational*. God’s spirit gives form to the world. Stars and mountains, fields and oceans, creatures and people – all came into being at God’s word. All is part of God’s story, unfolding and unfinished. Creation is God’s labor of love in progress. For all time, God is to be known in the touching, the seeing, the tasting, the hearing, the feeding and the sharing of God’s word, work and world.

Look back and remember. Remember that the prophets always reported that, though some would point to other signs, suffering would be the unmistakable mark of God on the Messiah. As Jesus attempts to bolster

his disciples' faith with lived experience, he tells them, "Look at my hands and my feet. Run your fingers over my wounds. Know these scars as a signature of identity and a verification that will remain even now in resurrection. They stand as a sign and a promise from God through me to you of God's unending graciousness toward his creation."

Jesus instructs his disciples and us to turn a face toward the future. He tells them and us to carry the mystery story of God's gifts of incarnation forward to a final chapter of resurrection where all of creation will exclaim, "Of course! We should have known! Now we see it!"

We are commissioned to help write the rest of the story, to make it full of life and hope and love, of struggle and sharing, a story interesting and intense. We are assured that the work of bringing the story to enfolded reality will be done in the world through Jesus' presence and in his name, 'as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be....'

Alleluia! Alleluia!

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ How does the word, phrase or image that struck you from this week's scriptures speak to your life or the life of the community, your family or our world these days?
- ◆ How does this week's gospel make you feel about the created world you see, hear, touch, smell and taste?
- ◆ How does global media coverage enlarge or diminish your personal sense of connectedness with the planet? In what condition is your sense of stewardship for all creation in these days?
- ◆ Jesus showed his wounds to his disciples to encourage their faith. How has your faith grown as a result of seeing the *wounds* and *scars* of another? How?
- ◆ When have you risked the vulnerability of sharing your own *scars* with another? What was it like?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Extend Easter hospitality to one or more in your acquaintance by an invitation to dinner. Begin the meal with the reading of the Easter gospel.
- ◆ Expand your understanding and experience of big church and small. Twin with a small church community in Africa. Alphonse Omolo in Kisumu, Kenya will put you in touch with a small church community there. You can contact him by e-mail at alphonse@pandipieri.org.
- ◆ Dig in the garden. Read in the garden. Pray in the garden.
- ◆ The Earth Charter aims to redress the wounds of the earth inflicted through laissez-faire development. Find out about this ongoing work by contacting the group at: www.earthchartersummits.org or ourcommonfuture.org

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The community joins in singing, "Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks." The song may be found on the Internet. The community then prays in two alternating groups.)

Watered Gardens

- I: God of openness, of life and of resurrection,
Come into this Easter season and bless me.
Look around the tight, dead spaces of my heart
That still refuse to give you an entrance.
- II: Open, one by one, those places in my life
Where I refuse to be overcome by surprise.
Open, one by one, those parts of my heart
Where I fight the entrance of real growth.
Open, one by one, those aspects of my spirit
Where my security struggles with the truth.
- I: God of the Resurrection, God of the living
Untomb and uncover all that needs to live in me.

Take me to people, events and situations
And stretch me into much greater openness.

II: Open me. Open me. Open me.
For it is only then that I will grow and change.
For it is only then that I will be transformed.
For it is only then that I will know how it is
To be in the moment of rising from the dead.

Adapted from **May I Have This Dance** by Joyce Rupp, OSM. © 1992 by Ave Maria Press, www.avemariapress.com. Used by permission of the publisher.

(The leader holds the bowl of earth aloft and prays some words of thanksgiving for the richness of God's creation.

The community joins in praying the Lord's Prayer. Members join in singing, "Benediction". The song may be found on the Internet.)

Members exchange an embrace of Easter peace.)

