

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER - 2021

When we confront someone - or someone confronts us - with the plain and, usually, difficult facts about a situation, that conversation is often called a "Come to Jesus Meeting."

We could say that the appearances of our Resurrected Lord were the original "Come to Jesus Meetings."

Jesus, in fact, is coming to his chosen apostles to confront them with the truth of his Resurrection as well as their lack of faith.

But just as we heard last Sunday in the Gospel of John's version of this same Easter evening appearance, Jesus brings a message, not of condemnation, but of peace and forgiveness.

When the apostles think they are seeing a ghost, he gently chides them, showing them his hands and his feet, and asking for something to eat.

The opening sentence of today's Gospel references Jesus' appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

On that occasion Jesus challenged them, "How slow you are to believe all that that the prophets have foretold."

He is saying the same thing to the apostles in the upper room.

Then, we are told, Jesus opens their minds to understand the Scriptures.

In our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles we see Peter having a "Come to Jesus Meeting" with the crowd in Jerusalem.

The descent of the Holy Spirit has taken place and so Peter now has the courage and wisdom to confront the people with their lack of understanding.

He confidently proclaims to them that, in Jesus, God has brought to fulfillment all that the prophets announced about the coming Messiah.

Even today's second reading from the First Letter of St. John is a kind of "Come to Jesus Meeting" between the author and the early Christian Church.

No one can claim to know Jesus Christ without putting that faith into practice by keeping his commandments ...

... and the fundamental commandment that Jesus gives his disciples is to love one another as he has loved them.

These three "Come to Jesus" moments are directed to us as well.

Jesus is present with us now. He wants to give us his peace. He wants to take away our fear and our doubts.

He wants to renew our faith that he is risen from the dead and that he is the fulfillment of the Scriptures.

And he wants to challenge us to live out our faith in concrete expressions of our love for others.

At the conclusion of today's Gospel, Jesus tells the apostles: "You are witnesses of these things."

Jesus speaks those words to us as well.

You and I are called to be witnesses to others of the peace, hope, and joy that Jesus brings to those who believe in him.

One way we can do this is through our participation in the Catholic Services Appeal.

By making our pledge we are helping to ensure that the saving truth about Jesus continues to be shared with people in Northwest Indiana, in our country, and throughout our world.

Just so you know, I do not plan on mentioning CSA in every homily I give during this Easter Season!

Last Sunday I gave the invitation and the challenge and this Sunday is a gentle reinforcing reminder.

I trust in your spirit of generous - even sacrificial - stewardship as disciples of the Lord.

And I'm sure that together we will meet and surpass our goal in gratitude for all of the blessings we have received.