

## ***The Third Sunday of Easter*** ***We Are Witnesses to the Resurrection***

During these weeks after Easter, the Church highlights various aspects of the Easter Mystery for us so that we can grow in our understanding of Jesus' resurrection and its meaning for our lives.

**Witnesses to the Resurrection:** In today's first reading, taken from the Acts of the Apostles, the Liturgy describes how the resurrection of Jesus transformed the lives of his first followers. The apostles, who had failed miserably when Jesus was arrested and handed over to be crucified, have now become bold witnesses of his resurrection. They are no longer afraid to proclaim their faith in Jesus because they now believe that he is risen and alive. And so they say to the world: *We are witnesses of these things as is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.* The apostles have become witnesses to the resurrection, and they *testify* to the world that Jesus is risen and alive. They *testify* that God's power is stronger than the power of death. They *testify* that God has vanquished the power of sin through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Being a witness to the resurrection is an apt description of what it means to be a Catholic and a Christian today. As followers of Christ, it is our mission to *testify* to the world that the crucified Christ is risen and alive. It is our mission to *testify* that the power of Christ's resurrection is stronger than the power of sin and death. It is our mission to bring a world turned in on itself to resurrection faith.

**The Lamb that Was Slain:** In today's second reading, taken from the Book of Revelation, we are given a glimpse of the heavenly liturgy at which the risen Christ is worshipped. The risen Christ is now portrayed as a *lamb that was slain*. What a curious image! What a powerful image! Christ is the lamb that was slain for the forgiveness of sins. Having died for our sins, he now lives forever because of the power of his resurrection. And so the heavenly court worships and adores him by singing: *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing.*

Just as we *testify* to the world that Jesus is risen and alive, so the heavenly court *testifies* that the slain Lamb is worthy of honor and glory because God has raised him from the dead.

**The Resurrection Changes Everything:** Finally, in today's Gospel, we hear another story of how the risen Lord appears to his disciples. This appearance occurs at the Sea of Tiberias in Galilee. The disciples have returned to their former work as fishermen. They have not yet understood that they must preach the good news of the resurrection to the world. And so Jesus appears to them a third time to call them to mission.

The resurrection of Jesus changes everything for the disciples, for us, and for the world. The disciples cannot return to their old way of life as if nothing has happened because everything has changed for them. The resurrection has changed everything, and their lives will never again be the same. The disciples must now follow Jesus and proclaim the good news of Jesus' resurrection to world. They must be witnesses to the resurrection.

The resurrection changes everything for us as well! Because God has raised Jesus from the dead, we can hope that God will raise us to new life as well. Because God has raised Jesus from the dead, we can be confident that God will have the last word, the only word that counts,

over the powers of sin and death. Because God has raised Jesus from the dead, we too must be witnesses to the new life we already enjoy in Christ. This third Sunday of Lent calls us to renewed faith in the resurrection and mission to the world

*Father Matera*