

Third Sunday of Easter  
Progression of Unusual Events  
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There is a progression of unusual events that occur after Jesus' death and we see some of them in our readings today.

In the first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, the "netherworld" is mentioned twice and again once in the Responsorial Psalm. This was the world where all the good ancients went after they died. About this world the Catholic Catechism states:

"Between his crucifixion and his resurrection, Jesus went to the place of the dead to liberate souls who had been held there, Old Testament holy men, women, and children." People like Moses and his family, Abraham and Sarah, Ruth and Esther, and the prophets.

We affirm this descent when we pray the Apostles Creed: "Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into (hell); on the third day he rose again from the dead"...Hell" is also translated as the netherworld.

The Bible does not say what happened next, but I propose that after Jesus came back from the netherworld, he appeared to his mother. And then to Mary Magdalene in the garden and then to the Apostles in the Upper Room.

In the first reading we also get a glimpse of the renewed and reenergized St. Peter. He who denied Jesus three times is now this fearless leader who proclaims of Jesus to a group of leading Jews: "This man, delivered by set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him." Strong words! It took a lot of courage for Peter to utter them. It is a wonderful example of someone being radically changed by graces flowing from the resurrection; graces available to us too. Graces that enable us to follow Peter's message in the second reading to "conduct ourselves with reverence during our earthly sojourn." Namely: upright moral conduct.

This brings me to the Gospel and one of the most loved of the resurrection appearances: the journey of two of Jesus' disciples to their town of Emmaus.

They were dispirited, confused, and discouraged by Jesus' death; so much so that they left the company of their friends in Jerusalem to return to their home. They had given up on Jesus. As we know, though, Jesus did not give up on them. St. Luke recounts the story for us:

"While they were heading home, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but they did not recognize him." They needed a special grace to do so, for his appearance had changed. The grace came to them when they invited this stranger into their home to share a meal. Key to their faith journey, writes scripture scholar Roland Faley, was their offer of hospitality. "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over," they say to Jesus. So, he went in and stayed with them.'

It was during the meal, when Jesus took bread said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them, that their eyes were opened and they recognized him. Elizabeth Chesley-Jewell sums it up: “When the two disciples break bread with Jesus, they see beyond their grief, allowing their hearts and minds to be open to the events of the resurrection. This gives them the courage to return to Jerusalem.”

## **CONCLUSION**

“Were not our hearts burning within us  
while the stranger spoke to us on the way  
and opened the Scriptures for us?”

The story of Emmaus reassures us  
that even when we do not recognize him,  
Jesus comes and walks with us.

We ask you to continue to reveal your self to us, Lord.

All we wish for is a ‘closer walk with thee.’

AMEN.