



April 15, 2018 • Third Sunday of Easter

After the crucifixion of Jesus, his disciples were in despair. Not only had they seen their master's horrible death, their own lives were now at risk, for the crucifixion suggested to them that Jesus was not the awaited Messiah after all. The Messiah had been envisioned as somehow coming in power, liberating Israel from foreign domination and signaling God's long-awaited return to dwell again with Israel. The Crucifixion suggested to them the possibility of God's rejection of Jesus, or Jesus' failure to achieve God's purposes.

This is partly why the disciples were amazed when Jesus appeared. God had vindicated Jesus by raising him. The Resurrection revealed that God's promises were actually fulfilled, precisely through this death. Through the cross, God had indeed liberated the people from sin and death. God had truly returned, in Jesus and then later in the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. The dominion of sin and death had been broken. The Resurrection was the first display of the new kingdom of God, in Jesus.

NOT FOR HEAVEN ONLY

In the Gospel passage, Jesus specifically emphasizes his bodily presence. He invites the disciples to touch him, and he eats some fish in front of them. He makes it clear that he is not a ghost and did not shed his physicality or his humanity when he was raised. The disciples began to understand Jesus in a new way. Christians later articulated this as Jesus' bodily resurrection. The resurrected Jesus, both human and divine, reigns both in heaven and on earth.

So when Jesus sent his disciples, and today sends all of us, to proclaim God's kingdom, he never means "for heaven only." God aims to renew, not reject, human bodies, human culture, and the created universe. God's project for us is here and now, within all the limitations and messiness of daily life. We are called to care for each other, for the earth, and for all God's beloved creation.

Today's Readings: Acts 3:13-15, 17-19; Ps 4:2, 4, 7-8, 9; 1 Jn 2:1-5a; Lk 24:35-48