

As I am writing this, I am struck by the events of the last few weeks, even the last few days. In many ways these events can be considered historic, some of which were joyous, and some tragic. There was the royal wedding in England, and the beatification of John Paul II in Rome. But there were also the tornadoes that ravaged many areas in the South. And then there was the killing of Osama Bin Laden, which brought joy to some, and closure to many. Put these with the natural disasters in Japan as well as other parts of the U.S., and what is being called the “Arab Spring,” and it seems that current events are almost overwhelming. For us Christians, it might be helpful in the midst of all this to remember what we are celebrating these days: what we consider the *most* historic event of all: the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

What we see in our Gospel reading from Luke, which tells of the appearance of the Risen Jesus to two disciples on their way to Emmaus, is that Jesus is still present to us when all these things are going on, even when we can’t recognize Him. In fact, the Gospel account tells us several ways in which Jesus is present, especially in the liturgy.

As Jesus is walking with the two disciples, saddened and confused by the cross and the empty tomb, we see that Jesus is present in the Scriptures. Still unrecognized by Cleopas and his companion, Jesus opens up the Scriptures to them, revealing how the Messiah was to suffer before coming into His glory. When Jesus is at table with them, and breaks the bread, it is then that they recognize Him for who He is. So we see Jesus present in the Word and in the breaking of the bread, an obvious connection to His presence in the Eucharist.

We Christians also believe that Jesus is present in us and in each other. To me, that is where the challenge lies. Is Jesus visible in us? Would others have as much trouble recognizing Jesus in us as the two disciples had trouble recognizing Him on the way to Emmaus?

Like Peter in our first reading from Acts, we are called to proclaim the Good News. The same one who denied that he knew Jesus before the Crucifixion is now speaking to the crowds about His death and Resurrection. In our second reading from 1 Peter, the author reminds us that our “faith and hope are in God.” We need to share the hope we have in the Resurrection of Jesus with the rest of the world, especially to those who are “downcast.” We have seen so much suffering as people grieve over the loss of loved ones, and others are working to rebuild their homes and their lives. Another passage from our second reading states that we are to conduct ourselves “with reverence.” We are to live with reverence for God, but also, I think, with reverence for each other, or perhaps it is better to say, with reverence for the Christ in each other.

As we reach out to others with love and respect, and help them get back on their feet, we are sharing hope, and in our own small way, we are revealing the presence of Jesus. The events of history and the events of our lives may seem to be too much for us at times, but Jesus never leaves us. He is always present to us. Thanks be to God!

May God continue to bless us all, and may we reveal His presence and love in our lives.

In the Crucified and Risen Christ,

Fr. Phil, CP