

April 4, 2024

Daily Reflections

Journeying through Easter



Center for Spiritual Development

JESUS OPENED THEIR MINDS

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An Excerpt from Today's First Reading and an Excerpt from the Gospel

As the crippled man who had been cured clung to Peter and John, all the people hurried in amazement toward them in the portico called "Solomon's Portico." When Peter saw this, he addressed the people, "You children of Israel, why are you amazed at this, and why do you look so intently at us as if we had made him walk by our own power or piety? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus whom you handed over and denied in Pilate's presence, when he had decided to release him. You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. The author of life you put to death, but God raised him from the dead; of this we are witnesses. ..."

ACTS 3:11-15

He said to the disciples, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the

prophets and psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said to them, “Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

LUKE 24:44-48

Reflection

As the resurrection narratives progress from the upper room to Solomon’s Portico, we are witnesses of the miraculous unfolding of the emergent communities, and those who are being molded into leaders for the many and varied cultures and religious traditions that are to constitute the Christian unfolding across the known world of the First Century and beyond. As text historians have unpacked over generations, we view Peter, the impulsive yet fearful spokesman for the Jewish faithful, who becomes the apologist for the spiritual merging of the Mosaic Covenant and the Law with the recreated Law of Love at the heart of Christian identity. He moves from the busy Jerusalem streets to the power center of the Jewish Sanhedrin, spreading the Gospel and drawing multitudes to the new Faith. He links Jesus to the foundational mission of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who formed the initial communities of the Jews. In Luke’s Gospel, upon his return to the disciples after the Resurrection, Jesus also reinforces his role in the miraculous unfolding of God’s vision throughout history: **“These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled.”** **Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.** In a brief span, Peter emerges as the Apostle to the Jews, calling the people to a new and fuller Covenant with God.

A few chapters later in Acts, we encounter the fiery enforcer of the traditional Law, a Pharisee by training, and a credal dogmatist determined to snuff out the radical followers of Jesus, whom he accused of corrupting Jewish traditions. Saul is resolute and unrelenting in his dogmatic fervor for the Mosaic roots of Jewish identity. As is often repeated, on the way to Damascus to uproot the heresies, he is confronted by the Spirit of Jesus himself. He is thrown from his horse, and blinded. Under the tutelage of Ananias, a modest local disciple of Jesus, Saul comes to understand the depth and profundity of Jesus’ presence in the world, and converts. By the time his journeys lead him to Cyprus, he takes on the name of Paul. Under that name, he becomes the Apostle to the Gentiles. The one who had raged against digressions from the Jewish Law becomes the voice inviting the entire Gentile world to join the family of Jesus.

The fascinating and sometimes baffling transition from a cadre of Jewish converts to an amazingly diverse community of believers that spread across the Mediterranean world in the fire of the Spirit is a history we have revisited each year through Lent and Easter for centuries. Nonetheless, this history is ripe with a wisdom teaching for every generation. Whatever our Christian roots, we each have an experience of revelation and conversion that addresses our spiritual and religious aspirations. With the passing of the years, these roots can become fixed and formal, serving more as a marker of identity than an ongoing invitation to a deepening walk with God and with each other. As we see in the life of Paul, one who is relentlessly connected to the teachings and practices of the past can discover a radiantly new and revealing presence of God in life, a presence that opens up what *was* into an endless horizon of what *can be* -- when we allow God to be God in every aspect and dimension of our lives and our faith.



Peter and Paul

For Pondering

- How do you experience the role and the riches of tradition as you travel your own faith walk with God?
 - How has your walk in church and community encouraged you to discover new dimensions of your faith life and the inspirations it can contain?
 - How do you unite your own religious growth with the unique horizons of others in your spiritual family?
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