

Easter Sunday

Sometimes people coming to the Easter Vigil wonder, “When exactly do we celebrate the moment when Jesus rises from the dead? Is it when we light the fire? Is it when we hear the Exsultet? Is it when we sing alleluia for the first time in six weeks? Is it when the deacon proclaims the gospel of the resurrection? Is it when we baptize? Or when we renew our baptismal promises? Is it during the consecration? When is the exact moment when we meet Jesus risen from the dead?” Well, it is all of these times. And several more. We meet him when the community gathers. Most importantly we meet the risen Jesus when we receive communion. Perhaps the greatest moment in which we meet Christ as individuals and as a community, is when we take and eat his body, take and drink his blood. Whenever we receive communion, we receive the risen Christ.

The first reading from Acts of the Apostles concurs. There the apostle Peter is preaching, some time after the resurrection. People want to know about Jesus Christ. Peter teaches the basics. This important passage anticipates the baptismal promises, the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed that were all developed centuries later. In these creeds we speak of the three Persons of the Trinity. The section about Jesus is more developed than those about the Father and the Spirit. Even in the New Testament, several times we hear just the basic facts about Jesus - as we do today. Peter says that God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power when he was baptized by John. He went about “doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil.” Peter explains that Jesus’ enemies “put him to death by hanging him on a tree.” But God raised him “on the third day.” These are the same beliefs we profess every Sunday. Peter tells his audience from the start, “You know what has happened.” It isn’t news. But this is what he believes, so he repeats it. We repeat the Creed every Sunday because it reconnects us with God in whom we trust. The words “I believe in God” do not simply mean, “I believe that God exists,” but rather “I trust in God. I follow God. I arrange my whole life around God Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

Peter also speaks about the appearances of Jesus after the resurrection, and here is where we see the connection to communion. Peter says that Jesus was seen by the disciples “who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.” Jesus appeared to them at meals. He probably didn’t do this because he was hungry, but because the disciples were. To this day, we who hunger for Christ still meet him in the eucharist every Sunday. When we participate at the Easter Vigil we take the first opportunity to meet the risen Christ in the eucharist.

Catholics should receive communion every Sunday. You do not have to go to confession every time you want to receive. Receive communion and let the grace of our Lord be part of your life throughout the week every week. If you are not eligible for communion in the Catholic Church, and if you hunger for Christ, please let me know. Please let the Church help you return to the table. The reason Christ came to us, died for us and rose for us is that he might save us. He gave us his own body and blood to help us throughout our lives. If you did not receive communion every week since last Easter, now is your chance to try again. Christ came for you. Won’t you also come for him?