

The Scriptures offer three kinds of evidence for the resurrection. One is the empty tomb; another is the angels inside it who proclaim the resurrection, and the third is the appearances of Jesus himself. All during the coming week through next Sunday, every Gospel we proclaim at Mass tells the story of an appearance of Jesus. The evangelists wanted us to feel confident in our faith.

Often people wish Jesus would appear again just as he did before. Sometimes our faith is so weak we need something concrete. This is one reason the Catholic Church rejoices in its many signs and symbols--because we believe that Jesus does appear to us, as he did that first Easter day. ^{with his living presence} Our church teaches that every time we gather for Mass, Jesus is ^{made} present in four important ways. First and most obviously in the eucharist. We believe that the risen Christ lives on in the bread we break and the cup we drink. Second, Christ is present in the Scriptures. The word of the Lord we read day after day here brings the presence of God's voice into our midst. Third, Christ is present in the priest. We priests are filled with faults and failings, as you know well. Yet our ^{faith} assures us that when we pray it's not we who pray but Christ who had no sin. And finally, Jesus is present in this assembly. It's in our community that he appears. We are the body of Christ.

As you celebrate Easter this year, I invite you to reflect upon those times in your life when you felt ~~you were most in the presence of Christ~~ ^{Christ appears to you}. Perhaps it was at church, receiving the eucharist. Perhaps it was in some private prayer, the birth of a new child, the answer to a prayer, or the simple enjoyment of nature. On this day when we celebrate the apparition of Christ, let us count the many ways that God still appears to us and render proper thanks.