

Easter 3 - B - 1

Acts 3:13-15,17-19; 1 John 2:1-5a; Lk 24:35-48

When I was young I was told stories about relatives coming to this country from far away. I heard the story that all of my great uncles dying in the influenza epidemic, saw the medals won by my great grandfather in World War one, heard the stories of passage to this country by relatives who had no money yet against all odds raised successful families. I heard my grandfather tell me of operating a tank in the second world war - and as he lost his hearing in late life - I remember him telling me how loud it was inside when the gun was fired. All this past history I never saw, all this I never experienced - but I know it was true.

We are all part of another family. All those united to Jesus Christ share a family history. A history filled with seeming tragedies, a history with amazing and unbelievable feats of survival, a history that has left its continued mark on those who follow - a history that tells us who we are. We hear words spoken to us that tell a fascinating truth and family history - prophecy and fulfillment, death and resurrection. Jesus says: *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.* These were events that had been prophesied for centuries before Jesus' birth, and fulfilled in his life, death, and resurrection. They are events that eye witnesses passed on to us (like my great grandmother and grandfather were eye witnesses to my family history and passed it on to me). If believe my great grandmother tell me that her three sons died in 1918, and if I pass this story on to my niece who never met her ... or you believe the story only because I speak about it today - all this makes these events no less true. Our history as a family of faith is rooted in events that happened surrounding Jesus Christ that were passed down by the eye witnesses and later written down and are found in our scripture - they are no less true because we were not there.

But you still have to trust the deliverer of the proof. As a child I could have listened to my great grandmother, and looked at those medals that my great grandfather won, yet tell myself that they were really just costume jewelry frauds - raw proof without trust doesn't do it, you always have to believe the witness. There are so many givers of proof that we believe without question, why would we question these witnesses? Look at our Gospel story today: the disciples had been told by Mary Magdalene that Jesus was alive, he had appeared to Peter, the disciples

who were going to Emmaus were in the middle of telling about seeing Jesus, then he shows up in the room during this conversation. Yet they still are doubting what is in front of their eyes. There is no reason for them to not believe all the witnesses, and there is no reason for us to not believe the things that these eye witness relatives of ours, and those they spoke to, have written down.

If you are moving this Easter to a deeper level of your faith, Praise God! If you are beginning to open your minds more to the truth of what we are told in the scriptures, Praise God! If you are ready to let go of doubts planted by a skeptical and secular society, Praise God! Like the disciples in the upper room, we can get confused, we can deny - in ignorance - the things that are right in front of our face. We can fail to trust the words of Jesus that he is truly present in our Eucharist to feed us. When we believe the words of our ancestors, we begin to see what we could call fake costume jewelry for what it really is: a precious medal of gold. Listen to the words of Peter today speaking to those who did not see Jesus for who he was: *Now I know, brothers, that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did; but God has thus brought to fulfillment what he had announced beforehand through the mouth of all the prophets ... Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away.* He recognizes they didn't get it - they doubted the truth. He knows that they struggled and says to them, as he does to all of us who struggle in faith, to be converted - which means to change direction, to look in a different way.

Looking at Jesus from the perspective of the prophets; looking from the perspective of our grandparents in faith - who were eye witnesses; listening to the recorded words of Jesus and believing who he really is - this can't help but move us to action. In fact we heard today that if you really believe, then you also have to believe all that Jesus taught, and act accordingly: *The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments. Those who say, "I know him," but do not keep his commandments are liars, and the truth is not in them. But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him.* We have a great group of witnesses that speaks to us down the centuries calling us to believe in the things they knew, to follow the Jesus they ate with, and to realize that if he says he is with us **he is** - it's up for us to be converted in faith, and perfected in the love of God through a life that follows where Jesus leads.