

Holy Eucharist, Rite II,

3rd Sunday of Easter, April 18, 2021

The Celebrant and LEM stand, maintaining physical distance. There is no procession.

Opening Rites and the Collect of the Day

Celebrant: Alleluia! Christ is risen.

LEM: *The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

Celebrant: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

LEM: *Rejoice in the Lord, always; let all that lives, rejoice.*

Celebrant: Let the heavens and the earth ring with God's blessings.

LEM: *For Christ is risen, risen indeed. Alleluia!*

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

LEM: *And also with you.*

Celebrant: Let us pray.

The Celebrant says the Collect.

O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**Opening Hymn: The strife is o'er, vv.1-3
1982, #208**

The Hymnal

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

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The strife is o'er, the battle done,
the victory of life is won;
the song of triumph has begun. Alleluia!

The powers of death have done their worst,
but Christ their legions hath dispersed:
let shout of holy joy outburst. Alleluia!

The three sad days are quickly sped,
he rises glorious from the dead:
all glory to our risen Head! Alleluia!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

The First Lesson¹

Acts 3:12-19

¹²When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, "You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? ¹³The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. ¹⁴But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, ¹⁵and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

¹⁷And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

Celebrant: Thanks be to God.

¹ The readings are from the Revised Common Lectionary. See: <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/>.

The table for readings in Year B (Easter) may be found here:

<https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/lections.php?year=B&season=Easter>.

Where two choices are given for readings, use the second one listed.

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Psalm of the Day

Psalm 4

¹Answer me when I call, O God of my right!
You gave me room when I was in distress.

Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.

²How long, you people, shall my honor suffer shame?
How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies?

³But know that the LORD has set apart the faithful for himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.

⁴When you are disturbed, do not sin;
ponder it on your beds, and be silent.

⁵Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD.

⁶There are many who say, "O that we might see some good!
Let the light of your face shine on us, O LORD!"

⁷You have put gladness in my heart
more than when their grain and wine abound.

⁸I will both lie down and sleep in peace;
for you alone, O LORD, make me lie down in safety.

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.*

The Second Lesson

1 John 3:1-7

¹See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. ³And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

⁴Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. ⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

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LEM: *The Word of the Lord.*

Celebrant: Thanks be to God.

**Gradual Hymn: The day of resurrection
1982, #210**

The Hymnal

The day of resurrection!
Earth, tell it out abroad;
the Passover of gladness,
the Passover of God.
From death to life eternal,
from earth unto the sky,
our Christ hath brought us over
with hymns of victory.

Our hearts be pure from evil,
that we may see aright
the Lord in rays eternal
of resurrection light;
and, listening to his accents,
may hear so calm and plain
his own 'All hail!' and, hearing,
may raise the victor strain.

The Gospel

Luke 24:36b-48

Then, all standing, the Deacon or a Priest reads the Gospel, first saying

Celebrant: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

LEM: *Glory to you, Lord Christ.*

³⁶While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ³⁷They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have

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flesh and bones as you see that I have." ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate in their presence.

⁴⁴Then he said to them, "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, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.

Celebrant: The Gospel of the Lord.
LEM: *Praise to you, Lord Christ.*

The Sermon: Not-Ghost Stories

One of my favorite lines from one of my favorite movies, the 1st of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series, goes like this: "You'd best start believing in ghost stories, Miss Swan. You're in one!" What follows that pronouncement by a pirate character described as being so evil that "Hell itself spat him out" is a *danse macabre* of all but one the undead pirates of the Caribbean, together with our bewildered heroine. It is at once musical and terrifying, entertaining and alarming. Miss Swan soon realizes that the world she thought she understood and could master is actually far stranger and less controllable than she had thought, even in her wildest dreams. She also realized that she doesn't know what to do about this, and might find cold the comfort in Hamlet's line to his best friend: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." What do we do when those "more" become terrifying? What do we do when we find they're amazing? Because they can be both: everything new I learn from scientists, everything I see differently through the work of imaginative artists, convinces me that what Hamlet says is true, beyond any doubt: there's a great

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deal that we don't know, haven't even imagined – and there may be things we cannot know and cannot even imagine. Some of them are terrible. Some of them are wonderful. This is the world.

But ghost stories? Them, we know. There are conventions, rules, tropes that one cannot evade, even if one is ironic about them. Whatever haunts us from the realm of the dead, from the realm of shadows, has only so much presence as light and darkness allow. They are not otherwise real. They cannot do things. They cannot eat, and they cannot drink. Ghosts, that is. The plots of both *Pirates* and *Hamlet* turn on these conventions, these common understandings. Ghosts don't eat, ghosts don't rest, and ghosts cannot bring peace or fulfillment. Instead, they offer moaning, mournful reminders that there is no peace, and that much is left undone, and usually forever, once a person's life comes to an end. As it will. As it must – and as the disciples in the stories we heard this morning knew just as well as we do. Ghosts do not eat. What comes (back) from the world of the dead does not live.

Or so they thought – Jesus's disciples, that is.

But there he was.

Appearing. Right in the midst of them. On the other side of a solid wall. On the other side of a still-closed door.

No-one had seen him coming. No-one had heard him coming. He was just...there.

Standing there, talking to them, calling them by name, asking – coyly, risen tongue in risen cheek, as though butter wouldn't melt in his mouth – “Wassup? Why you all look so scared? You see a ghost or something?”

Well, Jesus, something, or someone, just came through that wall and door, and the wall's still intact and the door didn't move. Whoever it is looks a whole lot like

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you, but I gotta tell you – this cannot be happening, and I don't want to have to start believing in ghost stories.

That was one of the rules I set down for myself, long ago, when I felt the tap, tap, tap on the shoulder of the call to priesthood: No ghost stories. Don't make me say that I believe in things that cannot exist or could never have happened. If that is the price of service, find someone else to serve. Believing in hope is hard enough, having faith that love can triumph over hate and indifference, that mercy endures and compassion makes a difference, that we can all be better than we are and that the moral arc of the universe bends toward justice – these require faith enough, more sometimes than I can muster. Don't add to that silly stories about dead people walking, fire-cars sprinting prophets to the sky, virgins giving birth to baby boys in barns, or even water magically turned to wine. Cute twee myths that people purport or affect to live by are only as good as the good they inspire, and if they inspire actual good, that is good enough. But no ghost stories. Don't expect me to believe in ghost stories.

Unless, of course, it turns out I'm actually in one.

Which is what they said.

Jesus's disciples, that is.

Don't make us believe in ghost stories, Jesus. What's going on?

"Peace be with you," he said. It didn't help.

Nothing he said helped. So he asked them for food.

A ghost wouldn't do that.

Right?

Right? They gave him some fish. Broiled fish – and it makes sense that Jesus would show up at mealtime. I mean, that's when they're most likely to be

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together. Also, it was a meal where they saw him last: this is my body given for you, this is my blood shed for you and for all and all – so they gave him a piece of fish to eat, probably full of bones, ironically. Dead fish, bony fish, but ghosts cannot eat, remember, so if he eats it then he must be –

Best start believing...

...there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

We're in one.

I've often wondered why this meal, not the Last Supper, didn't become the central rite of the Christian church. Why was it the last meal he shared before his betrayal and murder that became the place people wanted to ritually meet him? Why not a re-enactment of one of these post-Easter gatherings? Instead of "On the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread" we'd say "At the noon of the day of his return, our Lord Jesus Christ took fish," blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his friends, saying, "Take, eat. This is the food that sustained me upon my return to you. Whenever you eat this, do this in memory of the me." We'd all have to share little dried anchovies or something instead of wafers that it takes an act of faith to believe are bread, but that's a detail. "He came to us from beyond the grave," we'd pray. "He ate with us, and drank. He gave us peace."

My sons, in reviewing a draft of this sermon, suggested splitting the difference and making communion out of little Goldfish Crackers™.

The thought has crossed my mind.

Now it's crossing yours.

It's well within the rubrics.

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It's been done before. I've seen it. With my own eyes. You'll just have to believe me.

But fish-communion was not to be – so back to our – not a ghost story, really, but a not-ghost story, but still one that is not dreamt-of in our philosophy.

What is it? The understanding that the messiah had to suffer and die and then rise in order to...not make people just believe in that, or affect to do so, or say they do so because mommy or daddy or the church or the priest or some authority said to. It was that kind of magic *cum* religiosity-by-rote that Jesus and them were trying to get everyone else out of. The understanding of the messiah, etc., etc., was all in order that, as the Gospel of Luke tells us this morning: “repentance and forgiveness of sins...be proclaimed to all nations.”

That is – if you repent and accept that you are forgiven, you can go forth and sin no more. You really can – because this time, the one who said that you could and that this was true didn't stay dead, even though they killed him. John the Baptizer, who said much the same thing, did stay dead – as dead as Marley's ghost in *A Christmas Carol*, as dead as a boned fish on the plate. Dead, dead. Dead enough. But Jesus they saw, they experienced, they realized lived again.

Differently, to be sure. But again – and he ate fish. Heck, in John's gospel he even *cooks* fish to share with him, which means he must've been one hungry risen Lord, indeed. Be that as it may, the moral of the story is that it worked. Forgiveness, that is. Laughter after mourning. Spring after winter. Easter after Good Friday. Healing after pandemic and pain. Goodness after wickedness. Lives without sin following lives that wallowed in it. Days of righteousness after years of horror and hurt. Hope is alive – and that is no ghost story, but it is the story we're living in. Death has not the last word. Peace can be with us – and living as though it is true can make it come true. We can be, as 1st John says, purified – like rain or the dew. Pure.

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Undeified. Incorruptible. Changed.

He calls us “children of God,” which is miracle enough for a hundred lifetimes, yet even that is not the end, not the last word. Something more remains:

As 1st John writes, “What we will be has not yet been revealed.”

That is: there’s more to this not-ghost story. This is not the end. We do not know what the end will be, or even the next chapter. Sufficient it is, and suffice it to say that it would be to understand, internalize, and really accept that we do not have to live crappy lives anymore if we really follow him and choose not to, and make it so that everyone else can choose not to, too. That’s what all those church verbs add up to: repent, forgive, be righteous, purify; have faith, hope, wonder, believe – which is just another word for hope. He, Jesus, came back better than he had been in order to show us that we all can be better than we are, and would be happier if we were. We don’t know, quite, all that that will mean, or what it will look like or be or entail. It has not yet been revealed. But we see it in him, in Jesus, in the stories that came down. Walls were not barriers to him, nor closed doors. He came to bring peace. He was no ghost, and this is still no ghost story. So we best start believing in not-ghost stories, then – because we’re in one.

Amen.

There is no passing of plates or reception of gifts.

The Deacon or Priest prepares the altar and sanctuary for the Eucharist.

The People make ready their gifts of bread and wine. The LEM continues

The Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,

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true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Prayers of the People

The LEM prays. In the silence after each bidding, the People offer their prayers without speaking.

I ask your prayers for all God's people; for our bishops, our clergy, and this gathering, and for all ministers and people. Pray for the Church.

Silence

I ask your prayers for peace; for goodwill among nations; and for the well-being of all. Pray for justice and peace.

Silence

I ask your prayers for the poor, the sick, the hungry, the oppressed, and those in prison.
Pray for those in any need or trouble.

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Silence

I ask your prayers for all who seek God, or a deeper knowledge of God.
Pray that they may seek, and pray that they might find.

Silence

I ask your prayers for the departed [*especially N.N.*]. Pray for those who have died.

Silence

I ask your prayers for those on the prayer list of this parish, and those whose needs are known to you alone.

Silence

The Celebrant adds a concluding collect.

The Peace

The People stand.

Celebrant: The peace of the Lord be always with you,

LEM: And also with you.

The Ministers and People greet one another in silence while keeping physical distance.

Anthem: Our God Reigns

The Holy Eucharist: The Great Thanksgiving

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

LEM: And also with you.

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

LEM: We lift them to the Lord.

Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

LEM: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, holy Lord, giver of life and light. You fill us with your blessings and feed us with your constant love; you have redeemed us in Christ Jesus, renewed us in your Spirit, and brought us into everlasting life.

Therefore we praise you, joining with Angels and Archangels and with all the host of heaven, who forever sing this hymn, to the glory of your Name,

The LEM says or sings:

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.*

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

The Celebrant continues

Blessed are you, gracious God, maker of all things, judge of all who live. You made us in your image and to live in your infinite love. You gave the world into our care and bade us be faithful stewards of its bounty. But we honored not your gifts, misused your creation, abused one another, and rejected your love.

Yet you never ceased to care for us. You called us into your promise, delivered us from bondage, sustained us in the wild, and sent prophets to bid us repent and return.

Then, in the fullness of time, you sent your eternal Word, made human in Christ Jesus, to live as one of us, and to reveal your glory. Giving himself up to death on the cross, he triumphed over evil and opened for us the way of everlasting life.

On the night before he died, as he sat at table with his friends, Our Lord Jesus Christ took bread. Giving thanks to you, he broke it, and shared it with them, saying:

“Take, eat: This is my Body which is given for you. Do this in memory of me.”

As supper was ending, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks, and shared it with them, saying:

“Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in memory of me.”

Therefore, we proclaim the mystery of faith:

The LEM says

*Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.*

The Celebrant continues

In that mystery we offer to you this bread and this wine, fruit of the vine and the work of human hands. May they become for us the Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. May we who share them be filled with that Holy Spirit to live as Christ’s Body in the world. May we come to the everlasting heritage of your children, and with the apostles and martyrs and all your saints, enter into the joys of your salvation.

Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to you be honor, glory, and praise, now and forever. *AMEN.*

Now, as Christ taught us, we are bold to say,

The LEM prays

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.*

The Breaking of the Bread

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The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread, and then keeps a period of silence. The Celebrant continues

Celebrant: Alleluia! Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

LEM: *Therefore, let us keep the feast. Alleluia!*

Celebrant: The Gifts of God for the People of God.

The People consume their gifts. After Communion, the Celebrant says

Let us pray. *The Celebrant prays*

Eternal God, holy Lord, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart, through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Blessing and Dismissal

The Celebrant says

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.

The Lord be with you, this day and always, and give you peace.

The LEM says

Let us go forth, in peace, to love and serve the Lord.

**Withdrawal Hymn: Glorious things of thee, vv.1,2,4
1982, #522**

The Hymnal

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
he whose word cannot be broken
formed thee for his own abode;
on the Rock of Ages founded,
what can shake thy sure repose?

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With salvation's walls surrounded,
thou may'st smile at all thy foes.

See! the streams of living waters,
springing from eternal love,
well supply thy sons and daughters
and all fear of want remove.
Who can faint, when such a river
ever will their thirst assuage?
Grace which, like the Lord, the giver
never fails from age to age.

Blest inhabitants of Zion,
washed in the Redeemer's blood!
Jesus, whom their souls rely on,
makes them kings and priests to God.
'Tis his love his people raise
over self to reign as kings:
and as priests, his solemn praises
each for a thank-offering brings.

The Celebrant, the LEM, and the People depart, maintaining physical distance.

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For information about St. Mark's, please visit our website:

www.stmarksfairland.org

www.stmarks-silverspring.org

We hope that today's service has been a blessing to you.

We are here to serve you, and hope to see you again.

Please feel free to call us, email us, or visit us online.