Spirituality
Scripture for Life
Columns
Spirituality



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by Mary M. McGlone

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April 6, 2024

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Seeing is believing. Is that today's theme? Perhaps.

Folks hear today's Gospel and think of Thomas the doubter. What about thinking of Thomas as the guy determined to walk the walk and not just talk the talk?

Consider it. How was Thomas to comprehend the meaning of what his companions told him when they said, "We have seen the Lord?" He knew these men and their tendency to believe what they wanted.

Maybe things would have been different if Thomas had conversed more with Mary Magdalene. He knew that he and the rest of the guys had steered clear of the cross while Mary and other women remained with Jesus in helpless, silent solidarity. (John is the only evangelist to put a male disciple there; that was "the beloved disciple" who plays a rich, symbolic role throughout his Gospel.)

On the other hand, Mary and her companions went seeking in spite of the hopelessness of the situation. They became the first witnesses to the Resurrection, thus, our sequence asks, "Speak, Mary, declaring what you saw wayfaring."

Second Sunday of Easter

April 7, 2024

Acts 4:32-35
Psalm 118
1 John 5:1-6
John 20:19-31

And she responds, "Christ my hope is risen, to Galilee he goes before you!"

While the majority of the disciples hid in fear behind locked doors, Mary had gone out to find hope in the midst of tragedy. Whatever Thomas was doing, he was not hiding with the others. Was he, too, "wayfaring"? Was he looking for more than the others had offered him?

What they said sounded delusional — and this was hardly the first time that he thought that way about their ideas. Doesn't it make sense that if the disciples really

believed that Jesus had risen, they would no longer be in hiding, that they would be different?

At this point, Luke's description of the early community offers us some insight. Luke is bragging on the early community and the deep solidarity that flowed from their faith. Even if Luke exaggerates, he's holding up an ideal for us.

Luke tells us that after believing in the testimony of the apostles, the community responded by acting like people who had discovered the meaning of their lives and for whom nothing else mattered. Luke said that they were of one heart and mind.

They demonstrated this by considering themselves such a unified community that everyone would seek what another needed. No one could even imagine hoarding; that would have undermined their new identity. Their love and concern included all: They were one. This was their new identity in Christ.

Thomas didn't see anything like that in his friends in those first days after Jesus' resurrection. He didn't see them changed. Nothing about them told him that they were living a new reality.

Then, while Thomas was with them (explaining his disappointment?), Jesus again appeared in their midst and blessed them with peace. Looking to Thomas he said, "Come, look at my wounds, touch the scars and signs of death and see that even this extreme of evil did not win. I accepted all this believing that my Father would transform everything. Now, let's continue the transformation, beginning with you — *all of you*."

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What Jesus offered them was nothing less than what he had prayed for in John 17:21, 23: "May they be one as you and I are, I in them and them in me that the world may know that you sent me."

The concrete sign of their new unity was that the Holy Spirit drew them into community where they overcame narrow self-concern and judgment. Forgiveness of one another functioned like allowing a wound to heal, of ceasing to pick at a scab. Forgiveness was the only medicine that would allow their whole body to heal.

Like Jesus, everyone who had been injured would have scars — but those scars could become signs that injury was not the final word among them.

When Jesus appeared, he bequeathed them his own mission: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Those disciples had seen how Jesus lived his mission – never focusing on sin, but drawing forth each person's greatest potential. That was now their call.

The invitation to believe in the Resurrection asks for a leap of faith that starts with our heart, our hands and our feet, not our intellect. If we believe in the Resurrection, in Jesus' victory over all evil, we will be liberated.

When we proclaim, "Lord, by your cross you have set us free," we claim the freedom to love everyone as a part of ourselves, to learn the healing practice of forgiveness and the freedom that comes from the power of the Holy Spirit, who is the only one who can accomplish this in us.

When this happens, the world will be able to touch the reality of the Gospel in us and come to believe.

A version of this story appeared in the **March 29-April 11, 2024** print issue under the headline: Seeing (change) is believing.