Easter is full of unexpected surprises. In the very first Easter, many of the disciples were exposed to a variety of mixed emotions…from disappointment to confusion, frustration to jubilation, guilt, sadness, doubt and even fear. By now, many have already seen the resurrected Christ. He had appeared before the disciples showing them his nail scarred hands and feet. He had broken bread with them, yet it wasn’t until then that their eyes were opened and they recognized Him. Some, however, still had their doubts. They wanted tangible proofs and evidence in order to believe.

Even today many of us may still have trouble recognizing Jesus, in a spiritual sense. We fail to recognize not just for who Jesus is physically, by his physical appearance, but by what He has done and the lives that he has changed. We fail to see Jesus who is already and is still at work among us

Well, none of us were there at the cross or did we rush inside the empty tomb where the body was repeatedly missing. None of us have actually touched him on his hands and feet. **Yet, somehow we believe by the eyewitness’s account and the testimony of those who were there**…and that gets passed on from generation upon generation. As Jesus said, ***“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."[[1]](#footnote-1)***

During these 50 days after the Resurrection, it is a critical phase of our faith journey as we transition back to our somewhat “normal” lifestyle. The struggle is real for us to keep the Easter euphoria spirit going and keep fanning the flame of the Pentecost.

The Luke passage that we read earlier takes us back to the moment when Jesus appeared back to the disciples. Not only did Jesus offered the disciples to Touch and See His scars and nail prints, he also asked them for something to eat that they can Smell and Taste, as they Heard the Word that was spoken concerning Him. Jesus not only satisfied His own physical hunger, but more importantly he satisfied the disciples’ curiosity and lay aside any doubts that the disciples might have concerning the resurrection. He calmed their fear, while stimulated their senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch, in order to prove that he was indeed bodily alive and not dead.

Approximately 10 years ago, I was doing my chaplaincy internship at Lutheran Hospital out in Sunset Park, one morning, the phone rang and I was called upon by the nurse station requesting for someone to accompany an adult granddaughter who came to see her recently deceased grandfather. The nurse didn’t want the granddaughter to go in all by herself, so they requested a chaplain to accompany her. I happened to be on duty at the time.

But seriously I had no idea what to expect out of that situation either since this was only my 2nd week of my internship. The moment the nurse opened the curtain and uncovered the sheet that covered the grandfather’s body, I began to notice a very distinctive stench coming off a deceased body. The granddaughter immediately jumped on to the lifeless and cold body, as I stood by her side. It was an emotional moment for her as she clung to her grandfather’s body refusing to let go. There were no words to describe that bonding moment between the granddaughter and the grandfather. I learned quickly that when someone is in grief, sometimes the best thing to say was to say nothing, but just to be there in person.

After spending nearly 15 minutes by her deceased grandfather’s bedside, she finally bid her farewell. I offered to pray with her by the bedside. She appreciated that prayer and someone for being there by her side. Later on, as we walked out and talked, she told me that she really needed to be there personally in order to **Touch** and **See** (and **Smell**) her grandfather one last time, in order for her to **Believe**.

Come to think of it, **how often are we like that granddaughter and many of Jesus’ disciples who needed something tangible in order for us to believe?** Just as the granddaughter needed to come to the hospital and the disciples rushed to the burial place only to be disappointed by the empty tomb…then they believed. **Perhaps it’s better that we do NOT have any place to go to, or we do NOT need to see the actual body in order for us to believe.**

In the story that we read earlier in Acts, Peter and the other disciples were busy going around demonstrating to people what they have seen or heard, what they have touched, tasted, and smelled. They picked up right where Jesus left off - healing the sick, performing miracles, feeding the hungry, and proclaiming God’s word. They were not afraid to speak or to proclaim what Christ has done in their lives, even among their own people. Sometimes these are the ones who are the hardest to reach out to.

Not only did the Apostles not condemn their fellow kinsmen for what they failed to do, in defending the persecution and the death of their spiritual leader, but instead they offered them a message of hope and salvation through their repentance. Repent and confess of your sins now, so that you may be forgiven.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Those who were present were amazed by what they had seen or heard. They found new courage and power to proclaim God’s message even amongst those who rejected Christ. **They believe that miracles do occur in our lives each day even beyond the resurrection. Hearts are being changed, and lives are being revived through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

**This is the revolving new theme of the resurrection story.** But the story will not tell itself, it must be told by someone else and be retold over and over again. Chances are people will not pick up the bible and read it on their own or walk themselves into the church on Sunday morning. Now I’m not saying that it cannot happen, it can but the Spirit must convict them and lead them. However, the Spirit also convict us as human ambassadors to extend the invitation to lead others. As the Apostle Paul encouraged the early church in Rome, ***For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." 14 But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? 15 And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"[[3]](#footnote-3)***

Those early disciples remembered what Jesus had commissioned them before. They had been empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak with courage, conviction, and authority. They went out and proclaim their faith story and shared what Christ has done in their lives with others.

During these 50 days of post-resurrection, on THIS side of Lent and on the outside of the empty tomb looking in, **are we willing and ready to take on these new challenges as the Spirit leads us? Are we willing to roll out the “stones of our lives” that might be greatest stumbling blocks of our faith? Are we willing to open our eyes and our hearts, to see a new reality as the Spirit directs us?**

 That is what Easter does to our faith. It anchors us back to the empty cross and the empty tomb. It reminds us that when things are not working out or are heading in the wrong direction, Christ remains victorious and will triumph at the end. Look what happened to the early disciples and the first community of faith. On the day of Pentecost, more than 3,000 professed and declared their faith in Christ. Never under-estimate the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus opened the disciples’ minds to understand and their eyes to see. In the same way, the Spirit calls us into community where we may refine each other’s faith and perspective towards life. As one theologian puts it well, ***“in a culture of individualism, we belong to a community, the body of Christ. In an age that seeks security through violence, we seek solidarity, forgiveness, and peace. In a society that finds personal identity through social networking, we find our true name in baptism and in following Christ.”[[4]](#footnote-4)***

**The Gospel challenges us to be in relationship with the people whom we may consider as strangers or “outsiders”. It is not enough that we enhance our knowledge about God ourselves but to make God known among others, through our actions and in our lives, as God’s witnesses in this world. Through Christ, we have been invited to cultivate new relationships, plant new seeds with one other as sisters and brothers.**

**This is all part of God’s mission and our calling!** By the virtue of our baptisms, we are commissioned to represent Christ as God’s ambassadors and witnesses to the world, as God reassures us of His presence **“*Do Not Be Afraid! I will be with you always until the end of the age!”[[5]](#footnote-5)***

**As we transition ourselves from being an Easter people living in this “Good Friday” world, to a Pentecostal people doing extraordinary work in an Ordinary Time, may God continue to challenge us and inspire us through Christ’s resurrected hope and courage as empowered by the Holy Spirit.**

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *John 20:29* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Acts 3:19* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Romans 10:13-15* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cole-Turner, Ronald *Feasting on the Word, Year B, Volume 2,* p.418 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Matthew 28:20* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)