**4th Sunday of Easter, Cycle B**

April 21/22, 2018

Acts 4: 8-12; 1Jn 3: 1-2; John 10: 11-18

We are in the middle of the Easter Season; a season of joy, for Jesus is risen from the dead and lives among us. He is alive!

God continually offers us the gift of faith, a free gift from God that each of us either freely accepts or rejects. If we reject the gift, we live in darkness. If we accept the gift, then God gives us the ability to see, hear, touch and know the risen Lord. God gives us the eyes, ears, and hands necessary to recognize that Jesus is Lord and risen from the dead, and truly present in our world as our Good Shepherd.

Have we accepted this gift from God? Do we recognize the risen Lord in our midst?

For three years before his death, and then for forty days after his resurrection, the Apostles saw him with their human eyes, heard him with their human ears, touched him with their human hands, and ate with him human food. Then, they continued to recognize his resurrected presence in the breaking of the break and telling of the story of his life, death, and resurrection. They simply felt compelled to tell others about him. They became witnesses to all they had experienced.

Do you know that you have heard him speak, seen him present, touched him, eaten and drunk with him also? “When?” you may ask.

Do we not hear Jesus speak at every Mass when the Gospel is proclaimed by the deacon? Do we not hear Jesus speak every time Father says the words, “This is my Body? This is my Blood.” Do we not eat and drink with Jesus every time we approach this altar and receive his Real Presence in Holy Communion? Do we not touch the risen Jesus each time we receive the Eucharist into our hands and into our mouths? Do we not recognize him each time we pass before the tabernacle?

Yes, we do. Now we must be witnesses to all this! We must not be silent!

“Go, and announce the Gospel of the Lord!” the deacon commands at the end of Mass. These are not empty words. Go, we are told, and be witnesses to what we see here, hear here, and touch here. Jesus is risen! He lives, and he reveals himself even today, right here in this Mass, this Eucharist. With the eyes of faith, we will recognize him.

We must tell others the story of his life. We must not be silent. We must be witnesses to what we hear, see, taste, touch, and share in the parish, just like the Apostles did. We must tell others that the risen Jesus is among us, that he died, but rose and now lives as our Good Shepherd. We must let them know that we have heard him speak, that we have eaten and drunk with him, that we have seen him in the breaking of the bread at Mass. We must be witnesses to all this. We must tell others about him, and invite them to come and see for themselves, hear, taste, touch, and know the risen Lord.

No, it is not only priests and deacons who must do this… all of you must. All of you who have been given the gift of faith must testify that Jesus has risen and is our Good Shepherd leading us home to the Father in heaven.

Treasure the gift of faith which comes from God and enables you to recognize Jesus. Treasure your new eyes which see him, your new ears which hear him, your new hands which touch him, and your new minds which know him. Jesus is alive. Will you tell others what we do here in this place, at this Mass.?

All of us must tell the story of Jesus and let others know that he is with us. Tell them he lives, that he continues to speak to us, eat and drink with us. Tell them to come and see and hear and touch and receive him for themselves.