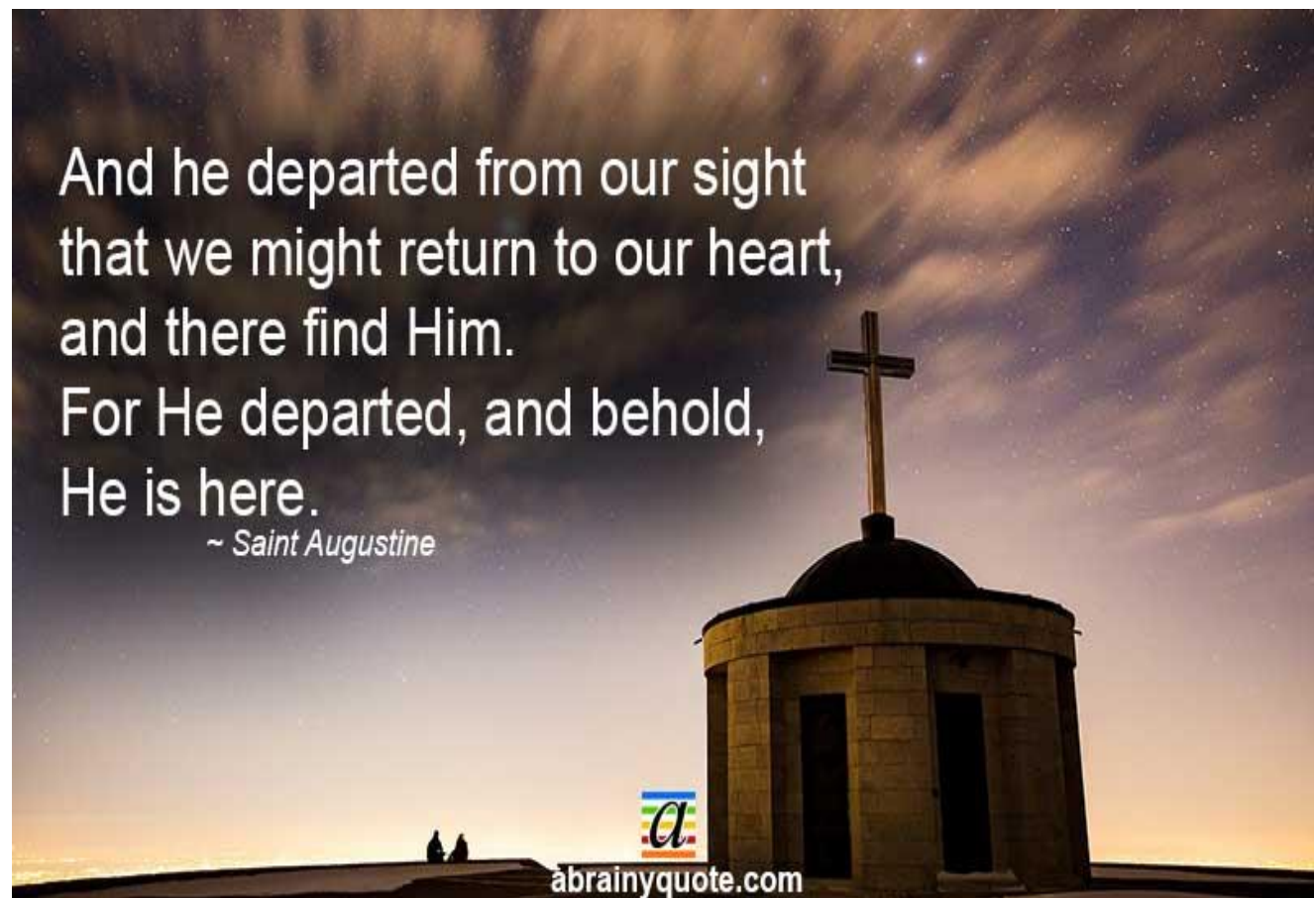


FROM FATHER JOHN – *“Give thanks to the LORD, invoke his name; make known among the nations his deeds. Sing to him, sing his praise, proclaim all his wondrous deeds. Glory in his holy name; rejoice, O hearts that seek the LORD! Look to the LORD in his strength; seek to serve him constantly. You descendants of Abraham, his servants, sons of Jacob, his chosen ones! He, the LORD, is our God; throughout the earth his judgments prevail. He remembers forever his covenant which he made binding for a thousand generations which he entered into with Abraham and by his oath to Isaac.”* ~ Psalm 105

He is Risen, Alleluia, Alleluia! Rejoice Always, He is Risen, Alleluia!!!



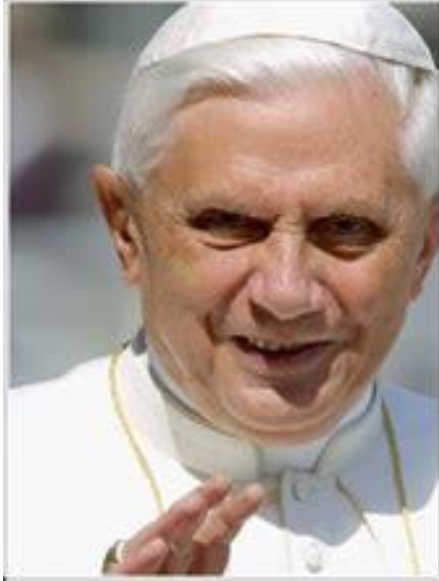
Non-Christians, agnostics and atheists often ask for proof that God exists or that our Lord Jesus is the Son of God or that He really rose from the dead. All this begs the question for us of “why do we believe?” Many people can’t seem to accept the Truth that is operative in our lives, namely, that God does exist, that He exists as the three persons and one God of the Holy Trinity and that Our Lord Jesus is the Son of God, is the Christ who suffered, died and rose on the third day.

One of the main reasons that we believe, and that people came to the Christian faith in the first century, is the testimony of eyewitnesses to the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord. The best eye witness testimonies are given in the four gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. These are the ones that we rely on today but that non-Christians often reject.

But, there are other eye witness testimonies that exist. Even testimonies of witnesses who were not Christian at the time. One such testimony comes from Flavius Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian who was an eyewitness to the fulfillment of Our Lord's prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem in year 70 of the first century. The following was written by Flavius Josephus in *Antiquities XVIII*, Chapter III, Paragraph 3:

“Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man; if it be lawful to call him a man. For he was a doer of wonderful works; a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross; those that loved him at the first did not forsake him. For he appeared to them alive again, the third day: as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.”

Notice that this is from a non-Christian historian and that he testifies to the Divine Wisdom of Christ, to His miracles, to His doctrine, to His crucifixion, to His resurrection, to the fulfillment of the prophecies about our Lord and Savior and that our Lord Jesus' words and actions attracted men and women of all cultures to follow him. This is an authentic historical testimony, rather than a religious one, and it shows that the resurrection of our Lord Jesus was common knowledge among the ancient Israelites. Scholars have authenticated that this passage was truly written by Flavius Josephus in the first century in *Antiquities XVIII*.



Faith in the resurrection of Jesus says that there is a future for every human being; the cry for unending life which is a part of the person is indeed answered... God exists: that is the real message of Easter. Anyone who even begins to grasp what this means also knows what it means to be redeemed.

— Pope Benedict XVI —

AZ QUOTES

Today's gospel passage is the eyewitness testimony to the resurrection by the two disciples who encountered the Risen Lord on the way to Emmaus.

Here is the direct link to the readings for Wednesday in the Octave of Easter.

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/040721.cfm>

I thought about studying for the priesthood when I was in college but I never became convinced that God was calling me to be a priest at that point in my life. It was something I was interested in but not something that I felt that I was being called to by God. I think part of the reason was I had it in my head that if God was calling me to the priesthood He would provide some dramatic sign to let me know. He'd call me on the phone, or speak to me from a burning bush as I walked back to my dorm after class, or there would be a blinding flash and a voice from the cloud, etc.

We see in today's gospel that God doesn't necessarily work that way. Our Lord Jesus didn't reveal his identity to the two disciples in a blinding flash or in some dramatic sign as He walked with them on the road to Emmaus. Rather, He entered into their conversation. He explained all that had been foretold in the scriptures. *"Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures."*

The two disciples were fleeing Jerusalem out of fear. In their minds, they had been defeated. The Lord they loved had been tortured and executed in a most horrible way. They were truly defeated men who feared for their own lives. Their hopes were not religious but political. *“We had hoped that he was the one to set Israel free.”* All their hopes and dreams had been dashed.

In their encounter with the Risen Lord, their hearts and souls and minds were converted. They had been politicians or rebels or what have you. Now they truly became disciples. Politicians and rebels typically want to change other people or somehow change society in a way that benefits them and their people.

But, a disciple is someone who is willing to allow themselves to be changed by the mercy and love of our Lord Jesus. Our Lord encountered two men who were somewhat misguided and he gently listened to them; hearing them out. He did not force Himself on them. He waited to be invited into their lives. When they came near the village, *“they urged him, ‘Stay with us.’”*

Our Lord and God invites us to live lives of faith. He does not impose on us, lay burdens on us or force us to be His disciples. But, what we notice with the two men on the road to Emmaus is that the invitation is mutual. God invites us to faith and we invite the Lord to *“Stay with us”*, to be present in our lives, to be present in our hearts and souls. God invites us into friendship with him and good friendships are always mutual.

“So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.”

This is Eucharistic language. Our eyes are opened when we recognize and acknowledge our Lord Jesus in the breaking of the bread; in the Eucharist. Our Lord does not call us to be alone in our faith but to enter into a community of faith that shares in Holy Communion as we receive His Body and Blood in the Eucharist.

Our Lord is not just historically present to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. He is truly and really present to us in His Body and Blood, Soul and

Divinity. He is not merely a historical figure or a memory of a loved one. He is the way to the Father who walks with us on our journey home to our Lord and God. As *“Jesus said to him [Thomas], ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”* (John 14:6)

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.

Jesus said to him,
“I am the way, the truth,
and the life. No one
comes to the Father
except through Me.

John 14:6 NKJV

