



Second Week of Easter -- School Mass
Father Paul Kidner, O.S.B.

We are celebrating this Mass in the Easter season whose focus is the salvation won for us by the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection story does not claim that Jesus simply came back to life, to that life he lived when he went about Galilee doing good and curing illnesses. The resurrection was not resuscitation; it was not like the raising of Lazarus, a return to ordinary earthly life. Lazarus would die again at some time. No, Christ's resurrection is essentially different. Christ would never die again. In his risen body Jesus Christ passes from the state of death to a new life beyond time and space, life in the spirit and in power. So the life he brings us, the life he shares with us is something new and if we participate in it we shall experience a new way of living, not just a return to former ways. During the Easter triduum we re-lived with Jesus the agony of his Passion, his betrayal at the hands of one he trusted, his condemnation in a travesty of justice, his cruel death on the cross and abandonment by those he loved, and then his triumph over death and his rising to new life. Easter is not a question of resuming those things that we gave up for Lent and returning to our previous way of life. Jesus, by his resurrection, has the power to transform our lives, to permeate them with his spirit, as he transformed the lives of his disciples. At the time of Jesus' crucifixion they were timid, meeting secretly and in terror, fearful of being arrested. After his appearance to them we see them openly and courageously speaking out, fearless of the authorities, attracting new converts to the initial band of Christians through the power of their words and their works. The miracles worked by Peter and the others in the Acts of the Apostles mirror the miracles carried out by Jesus in his lifetime. The members of Christ's body carry on his work, to those in physical need and to those who need Christ's peace. And these stories are recounted each year in the Easter season to remind us of our task, as members of Christ's body, to continue this work of bringing Christ's peace to others.

The people in the resurrection stories in the book of Acts and in the gospels have different reactions to what they witness. The disciples who were fishermen were incredulous and Jesus has to eat with them to prove that he was not a ghost. Mary of Magdala is upset because the body of Jesus is missing and she immediately assumes that the authorities have taken it away. The twentieth chapter of St. John's gospel tells the story of Mary's encounter with the supposed gardener. Some artists have portrayed the gardener with a gravedigger's shovel to give credence to Mary's words, "Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him." But Fra Angelico's beautiful fresco of this scene shows Jesus with a gardener's hoe to convey the idea that the risen Jesus is one who tends to the growth and care of the living, not the dead.

Today's gospel story about the miraculous feeding of the multitude and the amount of food left over teaches the lesson that Jesus did not raise us to new life and then abandon us to get on with living it on our own. The multiplication of the loaves is a forecast of the way Jesus planned to remain with us and nourish that new life through the abundant gift of himself in the Eucharist. Let us strive, with God's grace, to see that this new life really does make a difference in our lives. +



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY

