

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Apr 20th 2017

A movie called *Risen* came out a little over a year ago – perhaps you saw it. The movie follows Clavius, a commanding officer in the Roman army. Clavius presided at the crucifixion. He witnessed Jesus' death. He then leads the investigation after Easter, when Jesus' body "goes missing" (from the Romans' perspective). Clavius tracks down the disciples, interviews them, and tries to find out what they have done with Jesus' body so as to stop them from causing any trouble with the story of the Resurrection.

In this clip, Clavius finds the disciples in the upper room:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5JtCpDi2Bc> He sees Jesus in their midst, and reacts with shock and confusion. This is not the first time most of the disciples had seen the Jesus (except for Thomas). In this scene the viewer can see both the initial terror and the overflowing joy of meeting the Risen Christ.

In the Gospel today, two disciples have just returned from their walk and meal with Jesus on the way to Emmaus. They are in the process of telling the others what happened when, all of a sudden, Jesus is there! Everyone is "startled and terrified!" I have to smile at that – I imagine even the two telling the story were startled when it happened again. Isn't that usually the way, though? Don't I often tell stories I know to be true, for someone anyway? It could be a tragedy I heard on the news, or a happy story about the unlikely circumstances that led to two people meeting. And yet, when similar things happen to me or someone close to me, I am startled, or even terrified, that they are now reality in my own little world. The distance between words and experience evaporates. Head knowledge becomes heart knowledge. We tell a bit of the Church's story, our story with God, every time we pray together in the liturgy. And yet, I am always a little startled when I notice that Jesus is there. As the psalm says, "What are we that you (God) should be mindful of us? ... You have made us little less than angels."

In the Gospel, Jesus calms his friends down by showing that he is real-ly and tangibly there with them. Then they are still incredulous, but with joy. The depiction of the disciples' joy is my favorite part of the movie *Risen*. When Clavius interviews them about Jesus, they can't keep from grinning. Their joy overflows into witness, into real, tangible signs like the healing of the crippled man in the first reading. We, the Church in 2017, would not be here without that kind of joy. May our Easter joy overflow like the first disciples' did!

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