

# ST. JOHN'S AT DIOCESAN CENTER IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JUAN

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THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

*April 26, 2020*



## THE REAL PRESENCE

**The Rev. Andrew F. Kline**

ACRYS 2:12A, 36-41 | PSALM 116:1-3,10-17

1 PETER 1:17-23 | LUKE 24:13-35

Imagine. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ reveals a new reality in the world. Like Noah's rainbow and Moses' Commandments, the resurrection of the Messiah fulfills a promise. The promise of God's Presence. God will be with us always, here, everywhere, now and in the future. So we Christians gather each Sunday to celebrate that astonishing gift, now, most fully on this earth, in the Sacred Mysteries of the Holy Communion.

But wait, you say, we are struggling to gather together to do just that, to share communion, to be in communion, with one another.

John Lennon wrote a song that begins, “Imagine there is no heaven.” He was trying to solve a problem. Where should we focus our attention. “Imagine there is no hell below us.” He starts where he think the problem starts. We divide up reality. We create a two or three story universe. An upstairs downstairs world. A system of haves and have nots. The weak and the strong. The insider and the outsider. We forget what is right in front of us.

He has a point. Our troubles begin when we cannot see the whole, when we slice up reality to suit us. Certainly, this pandemic shows us the many ways we neglect and avoid how interrelated we are, how dependent we are upon one another.

It also shows us that while individually we may be helpless confronting our reality, as a family, as a community, as a nation, as a global society, we can imagine new solutions, better outcomes. We will get through this together, or not at all.

So, on yet another Sunday, when we still do not know when we will gather together again in person, we want to do more than imagine the reality of the Real Presence. We want to pay attention. Share it more deeply. Here at church. There at home.

Fortunately, our gospel story of the pilgrims on their way to Emmaus, meeting a stranger who turns out to be the Risen Lord, has always been a blueprint for imagining and sharing the divine life with each other. It is the great summary of not only what the sacrament means, but why it means what it means.

We are on our way somewhere. Jesus shows up, not recognized. He is a Way, a Truth, a Life. He speaks these things to us. We listen to the Word. His voice confirms the promises given: the Way, the Truth, the Life. It all works silently within us. We do not control it, just as we cannot hold the living one. We change our minds. We change our behavior. We stop walking our own way.

Finally, we invite this stranger closer in, to the center of our lives. We are amazed how much he went through, that he is marked and pierced and defined by his passion, yet not now weighed down by suffering, sorrow and grief. Instead there is compassion and healing in every gesture.

We are impressed that he is sitting down with us to eat, sharing what we have. Sharing what we are going through. Bread is broken. He vanishes. He is off to reveal himself elsewhere. Hearts burn. Things cannot remain the same.

So it has been in every gathering we call church from the beginning until today: the faithful gather, the Way, the Truth and the Life are spoken of, gifts are offered to God for the good of all, bread is broken, sacrifice and healing and deliverance are witnessed, remembered, made present. Then shared.

And a new way, a deeper truth, and a greater life, are let loose in the world.

Every Sunday, in these actions, we see that God is filling all in all. And we are one with him and each other.

In these actions, we share these gifts in such a way, and with such intention, that we participate in the very life of God we call the Real Presence.

“Imagine”, Mr. Lennon sings. Imagine, indeed, that there is nothing separating us from the love of God, no falsely constructed upper story called heaven, or basement we call hell, that takes us out of living fully now in God’s creation.

Imagine we really mean it when we pray: Your kingdom come. Your will be done. On earth as it is in heaven.

Mr. Lennon confesses “You may say that I’m a dreamer.” Indeed the rest of the song is an escape from reality. Isn’t the real challenge to look out on the field of struggle, to look oneself in the mirror, and ask: what on earth is going on here?! And what can I really do about it?!

Our resurrection faith declares that heaven has come down to earth and earth has been taken up to heaven – and that the life we share now is destined in Christ to overcome all death and suffering. We are in it for the long haul.

Instead of wishing for a miracle, today our eyes are all rightly focused on what we can do for each other, the wisdom and skill of the whole human race working together to defeat this invisible enemy of the virus. God has let loose in us an inexhaustible hope that he is at work in the world and we are partners with him.

We focus today, as always, on the bread and wine offered as the Body of Christ that will reveal and make visible the renewed and repurposed Body of Christ.

Our bishop is fond of offering the newly consecrated gifts of the Eucharist with these words: “The Body and Blood of Christ, for the Body and Blood of Christ.” These are words that prove the maxim: Sacraments do not make things to be that they are not; sacraments reveal things to be what they are.

Imagine. No heaven. No hell. Only God. All in all. No hint of distance between us and God. Between you and me. Today, around this table and yours, we stand at the very center of the universe, before the God Who Is, before the God with whom Moses conversed on Mt. Sinai, in the presence of the One who joined his friends on the road. The Real Presence. Imagine.