

Notes for Stewardship Council Chair/Prayer Leader May 2017

On John 20:19-23 (from 'Jesus, An Historical Approximation', José A. Pagola)

- We can't use historical methods for understanding what happened to the disciples following the death of Jesus – but something definitely did – their faith in the risen Jesus did not come from nowhere
- Prior to the writing of the gospels the disciples of Jesus would have been engaged in a process of questions, reflection, unexpected events and amazing experiences of faith – all in the light of the life they shared so intensely with Jesus – led to the awakening of a new faith in Jesus and the growing sense of his presence among them being more than just reflection on the past – believed such a revelation could only come from God
- Like most Jews of their time the disciples of Jesus believed in the resurrection of the righteous at the end of time – they could hardly have imagined the resurrection of Jesus otherwise – it was a relatively new concept in Jewish history, and prophesied by Daniel as a new faith: the martyrs faithful to God, and the wise who lead many on the right path will wake from the sleep of death – God will make them shine like stars – Jesus' disciples would have shared this faith
- Nonetheless the resurrection of one person before the end of time was something new although it would likely have helped come to terms with the scandal of his death – unjustly assassinated, God's vindication for the martyr had been fulfilled in him
- Eventually this came to be understood as the source of salvation for all humanity – the crucifixion cannot erase all they have experienced with Jesus – they experienced God irrupting in the world in a new and definitive way – awakened the hope of the poor in a God beginning to show God's liberating power in the face of extreme injustice and abuse – could it be that in his resurrection they were experiencing God's liberating irruption to establish the definitive reign of life here and now?
- Disciples are convinced God is at the heart of this process, throwing light on their search and making the risen Jesus present in their hearts – God is revealing the crucified Jesus to them, full of life – without this experience they would likely have revered his memory for a while before it faded
- They began to make sense of it by drawing on early formulas – Jesus 'let himself be seen' in much the same way God was seen by Abraham, Jacob and others – does not appear in a visible way but establishes very real communication with humans – their words alone are not enough to tell us how they perceived the risen Jesus, but certainly that they perceived his presence
- By the time John's narrative was written there had been decades of reflection on faith, all understood through the light of the resurrection – the gospel narratives are not trying to provide an accurate reconstruction of events, rather a collection of experiences – the unexpected presence of Jesus among them, doubts and uncertainties, process of conversion and reflections on Hebrew scriptures – aiming for their readers to understand the life and death of Jesus must be understood in a new dimension
- At the heart of the gospel narrative is a personal encounter with Jesus, full of life – Jesus lives and is with them again, everything else is secondary – this encounter is a gift initiated by Jesus – it is a peacemaking experiences, reconciling them to Jesus after they abandoned him – it is an encounter that transforms them – they want to share this with others and are indeed commissioned to do so

