

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK:

Reflection for the 3rd Sunday of Easter Deacon Charlie Salway

In the gospels, between the resurrection and the ascension, the Lord appeared many times to his disciples and others. Sometimes he was recognized. Other times he was not. In what form was he during these appearances and why didn't they recognize him when they had spent so much time with him before? The disciples he walked with on the way to Emmaus finally recognized him after he revealed the paschal mystery to them.

It isn't just a matter of our not being allowed to see God or Jesus. The simple fact is that as material beings we're so far spiritually removed from the actual presence of God that we may not recognize him when we actually get to see him. We will have to wait until the far distant future to stand before him. Until that time, we'll still be able to see the evidence of God's existence any time we desire.

We all know that words can't do justice to the awe and wonder of the natural world. Whether it's the depth of the blue sea, the power packed into a hurricane, or the colorful hues of a sunset, there is something beautiful and striking about the world in which we live. There's nothing like laying down at night and looking up at the stars in wonder! Hiding behind all this raw beauty is an even more impressive truth: the universe in which we live is finely tuned, perfectly balanced to be a hospitable environment for mankind and this can hardly be an accident.

Scientists have discovered that if the force of gravity were even slightly different in one direction, the sun would burn too hot for the earth to survive as a life-sustaining planet. Just how precise does the force of gravity need to be in order to make it possible for there to be life on earth? If it were off by just one part in 10^{40} (a 10 with 40 zeros after it), that would mean no sun and, therefore, no earth.

Rest assured that, when we are ready, many eons from now, we will be prepared to stand in God's presence, and on the way, we'll meet Jesus face-to-face, too. But right now, we have to rely on the eyes of faith to appreciate our heavenly Father.

Someone asked me once, "If you can't see God, why do you believe he exists?" I am not sure I was able to give them the answer that I would give today. Perhaps you are a skeptic, or maybe you are like me and you just weren't sure.

My path to faith did not come by reading an essay presenting rational arguments for God's existence and love. My faith in God came after I knew with my mind and felt in my heart that something was not right with the world and I needed to find answers. As a tiny creature in a vast universe I was calling out for answers, answers that mattered more than the next paycheck or ballgame. To my surprise, God came to me through his Word. A God who was willing to overlook all of my faults and still love me. A God who wishes us to seek him. A God who loves us so much, He would rather die than risk spending eternity without us. This is the God we find when we hear His Word.

St Paul explains it best when he writes to the Roman's. *"The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach). For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Faith in the heart leads to justification, confession on the lips to salvation."* (Romans 10:8b-10)

All the arguments of the finest philosophers will never lead the skeptic to know God until he realizes he's deaf and blind. We once were deaf but now we hear the words of God, we once were blind but now we see. I may not recognize myself in a mirror, but I do recognize the awe and wonder of our world does not happen by chance.

By God's grace, we believe in a God whom we cannot see, at least not yet.

My prayer is for all to come to the realization that we cannot walk this world without the help of a compassionate, loving God. Who can take away our blindness and open our hearts and minds.

