

Opening the Word: The other signs

✘ In the Gospel of John, Our Lord transformed water into wine at Cana, healed the royal official's son, cured a paralytic, fed the crowd with miraculous loaves and fishes, walked on water, gave sight to the man born blind and raised Lazarus from the dead.

Just last week we gazed with wonder as he washed the feet of his disciples, spoke words of comfort to this motley crew, suffered his passion and rose from the dead. We followed Mary along to the tomb, seeing the greatest of all signs – the risen body of the Word made flesh.

And yet there is a strange interjection by the evangelist at the conclusion of his Gospel: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (Jn 20:30-31).

[Second Sunday of Easter: April 28, 2019](#)

ACTS 5:12-16

PS 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

REV 1:9-11A, 12-13, 17-19

JN 20:19-31

Readers of this passage must ask themselves: "Why stop with just the seven signs? Why just the few resurrection appearances? If there were more, why not include them all?" After all, we're talking about the salvation of humanity. Could we ever tire of hearing more about Jesus, discovering the various ways that he manifested himself as the Word made flesh to his disciples?

To understand what the evangelist is doing, we have to attend to the well-known encounter of Jesus with the disciples locked

away in fear. Jesus appears in their midst, breathing the Holy Spirit.

Thomas isn't there. Thomas doesn't see, doesn't encounter the resurrected body of Our Lord. Thomas tends to become the whipping boy in sermons. He becomes the scientific skeptic who had to see in order to believe.

In point of fact, we share a good deal in common with the absent Thomas. Unlike the disciples gathered in the locked room, we have not seen the resurrected body of Our Lord. We have not heard him announce to us face to face, "Peace be with you."

When Jesus comes back the following week, encountering Thomas, he lets him place his hands in his side. He lets him explore the wounds in his hands. Thomas cries out in worship, adoring the resurrected Lord.

Jesus then proclaims to Thomas, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" (Jn 20:29).

In other words, blessed are we, the Church gathered together in adoration of the Lamb once slain. But, are we deluding ourselves? Are we just jumping into the abyss of faith without seeing anything?

This question returns us to the strange interjection by the evangelist at the end of this Gospel. Jesus did many more signs that are not recorded. In the Church today, Jesus still manifests himself through signs. He appears in the sign of the Eucharist. He appears in the sign of the hungry and thirsty. He appears in the sign of those baptized into Christ.

The Church is dependent on this economy of signs. It is within the Church, within the assembly of disciples, where we meet the risen Lord.

As it turns out, there are many more signs to see. The season of Easter is a time to train our sight, to see the risen Lord who isn't done feeding the crowds and raising the dead. In other words, saving the world.

Timothy P. O'Malley, Ph.D., is managing director of the McGrath Institute for Church Life.