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Monday of Easter Week

[Acts 2:14, 22-33](#); Matt 28:8-15

The Easter season is 50 days long to emphasize both its importance and to give us time to absorb the implications of this central mystery of our faith. Jesus is alive and among us. The crucified and risen Christ is the head of the Mystical Body we were incorporated into by baptism. As his sisters and brothers, we are being drawn into greater and greater intimacy with him and his redemptive mission in the world.

The week after Easter is traditionally an ideal time for many Christians to go on retreat, either in fact or by devoting extra time to prayer and reflection. The readings assigned to this week are entry points into the mystery of the Resurrection. The Gospels take up many of the questions the early church faced about the reality and nature of the shocking claim that the crucified Jesus was alive.

In today's Gospel from Matthew, attempts to deny the resurrection are met with the testimony of the women who encountered Jesus alive. Rumors that the body had been removed from the tomb while the soldiers who were assigned to prevent this slept are dismissed as illogical. How did they know if they were asleep? Matthew's Gospel attributes this story to the fact that the soldiers were bribed to spread this self-incriminating alibi for their false witness.

Throughout the coming week, the Lectionary will present accounts of the many appearances by Jesus to his disciples. He mysteriously enters the locked upper room, shows them his pierced hands and feet, eats with them, bestows his *Shalom* on them. He breathes the Holy Spirit into them and sends them forth to share the

Gospel of forgiveness. We will hear about the mysterious “stranger” who accompanied two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, a beautiful story in Luke that identifies the Eucharist as one setting where the early faith communities experienced the risen Jesus by delving into the Scriptures and in the breaking of the bread.

I will be making a short retreat myself this week, and I urge readers of "Pencil Preaching" to immerse themselves in the readings to find their own personal encounters with the risen Christ through the Living Voice of the Word and the indwelling of the Spirit. **"Pencil Preaching" will resume after a brief respite.** Thank you for supporting the *National Catholic Reporter* by coming to this site and by subscribing to the paper and e-edition. For over 56 years, *NCR* has been providing news and opinion connecting the Gospel to the social justice mission of the church in the world. Pencil Preaching is just one of the many spiritual resources *NCR* and *Global Sisters Report* offer our readers.

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