

HOMILY & PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL—3rd SUNDAY OF EASTER—APRIL 26, 2020

We are isolated from our friends at work, at school; we are confined to our homes either alone, therefore lonely, or we are cooped up with family, on top of each other and therefore, sometimes, frustrated by each other. God has given us this time of trial. What is God saying to us? What is God saying to you? What does God want us to see in all of this?

Jesus always comes to find us. That is what He does in the Gospel today. Cleopas and the other disciple are sad, downcast, discouraged—they have lost hope; all their dreams of Jesus as Messiah are destroyed by His shameful death on the cross. For them it is finished. But Jesus comes to them, to renew and to save and to bless them. Likewise, Jesus always comes to us especially when we are feeling lost, especially at this time of trial.

But the two disciples did not recognize Him. Are we failing to see Jesus coming now—today in April 2020? If we cannot see Him now we ask, “why”? We can answer this by asking why did God did not want Cleopas and the other disciple to recognize Him? One reason is because they had pre-conceived ideas of how God works: they thought the Messiah had come to make Israel the dominant power that would bring justice and God’s political reign over the world. Could this be a reason we are not now recognizing Him in our present suffering? Is our idea of God’s way out of sync with God’s way?

God chose the path of a slow revelation of His risen presence to Cleopas and friend; slow so that they would learn to trust Him. After all, they had very little trust: Jesus said to them, “You men of little faith, so slow to believe”. Perhaps we are like them. We, too, have little trust in Jesus. Like them, slow to believe. So our vision of His presence to us now is dimly seen. But He is with us, and like these two disciples, He is speaking to us.

Jesus opens their eyes. God’s Word has incredible power: “Were not our hearts on fire”. When Jesus explained the Scriptures to them they were fascinated. When they arrived at Emmaus they couldn’t bear the thought of parting from Him—they wanted to hear more and so invited Him into the inn. My friends look at the readings, especially the Gospel, at the end of this homily. Become fascinated! “...He is the one...whose body did not experience corruption”, says St Peter in our first reading as he preaches on Pentecost Sunday. Our hope, Jesus Christ, has called us to this incorruptible state—eternal life. A life that is now—today—a blessing full of a deep joy.

Jesus gives us an intimacy beyond expectation. We encounter the incorruptible One in the intimacy of a shared meal. He comes to us in Holy Communion and gives us the Life which cannot be destroyed. We, too, as with Cleopas and the other disciple, recognize Him in the breaking of bread at Mass.

Jesus moves us to share Him, His Life. Cleopas and the other disciple immediately get up—at the end of the day, tired as they are—and return to Jerusalem, a walk of at least two and a half hours. That’s how infectious the Gospel is. What about you and I? Are our eyes opened? Is the “deep joy” in our hearts? If it is, our desire is to let others know the Good News that has given us this new Life. The most perfect way to share Jesus is by the way we live our life. Others should see how being a Christian has truly affected us. If there is no difference between the way we live, and those of our friends who don’t believe—we must ask ourselves have we truly allowed the gift of Hope to enter our life, have we allowed Christ’s Love to fill our life, do we possess the gift of Faith? If not, let us ask for it.

Jesus “...vanishes from their sight”, St Luke tells us. But they are not devastated! How strange! Why do they not feel lost, discouraged? Immediately that He breaks the bread (this is the Mass) He disappears. Something happens to them at that moment. That he is incorruptible Life must have communicated itself to Cleopas and his friend. He Is Risen! This is the reason we are missing the Mass so much now. Today, in April 2020, the Risen Life of Christ is not available to us in the Holy Eucharist. May the Lord take pity on us and soon reunite us with Himself in the Holy Eucharist. Amen.

READINGS OF THE 3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER

First reading—Acts 2:14,22-33 ©

God raised this man Jesus to life, and all of us are witnesses to this

On the day of Pentecost Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd in a loud voice: 'Men of Israel, listen to what I am going to say: Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God by the miracles and portents and signs that God worked through him when he was among you, as you all know. This man, who was put into your power by the deliberate intention and foreknowledge of God, you took and had crucified by men outside the Law. You killed him, but God raised him to life, freeing him from the pangs of Hades; for it was impossible for him to be held in its power since, as David says of him:

I saw the Lord before me always,

for with him at my right hand nothing can shake me.

So my heart was glad

and my tongue cried out with joy;

my body, too, will rest in the hope

that you will not abandon my soul to Hades

nor allow your holy one to experience corruption.

You have made known the way of life to me,

you will fill me with gladness through your presence.

'Brothers, no one can deny that the patriarch David himself is dead and buried: his tomb is still with us. But since he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn him an oath to make one of his descendants succeed him on the throne, what he foresaw and spoke about was the resurrection of the Christ: he is the one who was not abandoned to Hades, and whose body did not experience corruption. God raised this man Jesus to life, and all of us are witnesses to that. Now raised to the heights by God's right hand, he has received from the Father the Holy Spirit, who was promised, and what you see and hear is the outpouring of that Spirit.'

Responsorial Psalm—Psalm 15(16):1-2,5,7-11

Second reading—1 Peter 1:17-21 ©

Your ransom was paid in the precious blood of Christ

If you are acknowledging as your Father one who has no favourites and judges everyone according to what he has done, you must be scrupulously careful as long as you are living away from your home. Remember, the ransom that was paid to free you from the useless way of life your ancestors handed down was not paid in anything corruptible, neither in silver nor gold, but in the precious blood of a lamb without spot or stain, namely Christ; who, though known since before the world was made, has been revealed only in our time, the end of the ages, for your sake. Through him you now have faith in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory for that very reason – so that you would have faith and hope in God.

Gospel Acclamation—cf. Lk 24:32

Alleluia, alleluia!

Lord Jesus, explain the Scriptures to us.

Make our hearts burn within us as you talk to us.

Alleluia!

Gospel—Luke 24:13-35 ©

They recognized him at the breaking of bread

Two of the disciples of Jesus were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognizing him. He said to them, 'What matters are you discussing as you walk along?' They stopped short, their faces downcast.

Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, 'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days.' 'What things?' he asked. 'All about Jesus of Nazareth' they answered 'who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they did not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing.'

Then he said to them, 'You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?' Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself.

When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. 'It is nearly evening' they said 'and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?'

They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, 'Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognized him at the breaking of bread.