

Homily: Easter 3 Emmaus 2020

As lockdown continues, for many the initial fear of the virus and its implications has moved to disappointment and disillusionment in many ways. Although light is promised at the end of the tunnel, an image I often use, it seems with so many different messages, some speaking of the end of the year, or even a years' time, that light is very faint or too far away, and can lead quite a few to despair. The readings at Mass are there to help.

The two disciples we meet walking on the Emmaus road have turned their backs on Jerusalem, the place of their hope, and are walking away. They can't have been impressed with the empty tomb, or they would have stayed put. Nor, as they reveal to us, were they interested in the strange story the women had told; it doesn't bring them any comfort after the horrors and disappointments of the last few days. The hope they cherished hasn't been fulfilled.

For many people that is very much life at the moment. Locked down, perhaps the whole future of life uncertain, if running their own business, or unable to work from home, with so much closed. I don't need to elaborate we are all caught up in it. And we do talk or email or however we communicate, relate what is going on.

Because the two on the road are doing just that, the Risen Jesus can enter their conversation and interpret their experiences in a different way. As we talk together the Risen Jesus can offer a new interpretation of our own way through life. On our way, as just at the present moment, we can have the same experience as the disciple's on the road. We've become fearful, disillusioned. The illusions that we had about life, and many other matters, collapse. Then everything is almost taken out of our hands.

We face the ruin of our lives. What we would most like to do is walk away from it. But we aren't alone on our way. As long as we talk with one another, Jesus, the Risen One will go with us and disclose the meaning of our life to us. The remark "Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?" is the key to understanding Jesus' destiny, and also our own fate too. It was God's will, which we cannot question, that the Messiah should suffer in order to enter into his glory. And that is our way, too. Only through tribulations do we attain true life, the glory that God has

prepared for us, in the form that God has devised for us. It is good that we have been disillusioned, that the images that we have made of ourselves have been shattered. Only in this way do we attain God's glory.

Jesus interprets the whole of Holy Scripture to the two travellers. He shows them that the death and resurrection of Jesus are the summary of the whole Bible.

That means not only that the death and resurrection of Jesus are foretold in some verses of the Bible but rather St Luke understands by this that the whole message of the Bible can be summed up in the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus. All the sayings about the God who redeems and saves, the God who leads us out of the pit, who frees the enslaved people, who saves us from distress, reach their fulfilment in the death and resurrection of Jesus. There is nothing from which God cannot save us.

God has raised Jesus from the dead. So God will also lead us from darkness into light, from the tomb to life, from rigidity to liveliness, from imprisonment to freedom, from blindness to sight, from paralysis to walking, from legalism to love. There is no longer any darkness which is not penetrated by the light of Easter. The Paschal candle burns like the 'one Morning Star that never sets.' There is no longer a tomb in which life is not already stirring.

The travellers ask Jesus to stay with them. They are tired and weary, the day is almost over. That can be an image of our life. Where darkness is coming over us, when night falls on our souls, and we ask the risen one to stay with us. Jesus becomes their guest, and makes himself known not just in opening the scriptures, but doing what he had commanded to do, 'he took the bread, and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them.' Then he vanished from their sight.

That is the mystery of the resurrection. Jesus is with us and among us, but we can't hold him. He opens our eyes, our hearts and our spirits, feeding and nourishing with His Word and his Sacrament, and then sends us out. The travellers, once they realise who it was, were radically changed. They are no longer tired and downcast. In this new energy of the Risen Christ they set out that instant back on the road. Their faces glowing, their eyes full of light and purpose. Their pilgrimage of faith has recovered its

direction, back to the Holy City, Jerusalem. And they tell their story of Jesus, just as we are sent out at the end of Mass to announce the good news.

Many people are saying it will be a very different world when this is ‘all over.’ We hope so too, life was ripe for change.

Jesus came to change the world, to turn the world upside down; Jesus is the answer. He is the way, the truth and the life.

Our Psalm today is a great help here, and one for us to use in this pandemic. “Show us Lord, the path of life.” It is the Psalm which also follows the test of Abraham’s faith, in the 2nd reading at the Easter Vigil. It is a great prayer of trust and confidence in God. Already within the New Testament this psalm was understood as referring to the resurrection of Christ, and it is included in the first reading from Acts. It is not that the psalmist foretold the resurrection of Jesus, but that the early church recognised in the words an apt description of God’s protection of Jesus, even in death, and God’s vindication of him.

The response today or the one at the Easter vigil, are both well worth having in mind, and to let them run through our minds as the days and weeks pass; either, **Show us Lord, the path of life,** or **Preserve me God, I take refuge in you.** Or even, ‘**my happiness lies in you alone.**’ There is no surer rock.

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