

Fr Paul..... I thought you may like some reflection on the gospel which would have been used at Mass on the evening of Easter Sunday. It may be useful to become one of the disciples in reading this text.

Scripture Reflection: Luke 24: 13 – 32

The Road to Emmaus

In the early Church, when preparing converts for baptism, this scripture passage was widely used as an example of how to share faith and continues to be the model for catechesis today.

In it, we see two disciples making their way to the town of Emmaus, 7 miles from Jerusalem. It is 'the first day of the week.' They are talking together and discussing the events which had just happened. As they walk, they are approached by a stranger (Jesus himself) but they do not recognise him. They are unable to recognise Jesus because their faith was still weak. He asks them what they are talking about. They are surprised ... and say

'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days. He asked, 'What things?' They answered, 'All about Jesus of Nazareth, who showed himself a prophet powerful in action and speech before God and 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 all this happened, and some women from our group have astounded us : they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they could 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.

We notice they say, 'our hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free'. This is echoing the common Jewish belief that the Messiah would be the one to free Israel from oppression. (in this case the Roman oppression) So they have not grasped Jesus' true mission.

Then he said to them: 'You foolish men! So slow to believe all that the prophets have said. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering 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.

This is an enormously powerful passage: Jesus is the Suffering Christ – obedient to the Will of his Father. The true meaning of the scriptures and teachings of the prophets is that God's kingdom is not of this world. Jesus embraces his suffering so that we might be truly free to be the sons and daughters of God.

When they arrive at Emmaus, Jesus makes as if he is going on....but they persuade him to stay with them....and this is where the passage takes on a very powerful meaning. They sit to share a meal together....

When they were 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 recognised 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?'

So, here we have in this short passage, the heart of Christian faith : to listen to the living Word of God - and to share in the 'breaking of bread'. In this way, we encounter the living Jesus who will also transform our hearts and our understanding. And so, this account sums up for us what it means to be disciples of Jesus.

This is the faith of the early church and it is our same faith. That we, who may be struggling to understand our lives, may draw near to Jesus and share our experiences with him, in the sure knowledge that he will lift our burdens and renew our faith. He seals this with the gift of himself in the Eucharist. We, too, gather at his table and our nourished by him.

The church, wanting to follow, this pattern in the way they prepared others for baptism, places Jesus at the very centre of the conversation. He is the one who leads us to faith. This account ends with the disciples hurrying back to Jerusalem to share with the others what had happened, and how they had recognised Jesus in the breaking of bread.

The Lord is Risen! Alleluia!

Let us listen to the Risen Lord allowing Him to fill ourselves with heart and mind upon a new dawn as we recognise Him in the' breaking of the bread'.

Give a few minutes of stillness. May be pick a word, a line from the gospel placing yourselves as one of the disciples and finish by asking the Father to provide for us the bread and wine the One that will become the Body and Blood of the Risen Lord and with Him we pray the prayer of love Our Father...

I will remember you and your family as I celebrate Holy Mass during this holy Season.

Take care and be safe.

Fr Paul