Homily for the Third Sunday of Easter 2026 Year A

Today's Gospel is the last part of St. Luke's account of what happened on the road to Emmaus, some 7 miles from Jerusalem.

Two of Christ's disciples, one of them called Clopas, were in flight for fear of their lives. They were devastated by the brutal death of Jesus on Good Friday. They had followed Him and listened to Him and had totally misunderstood the meaning of His mission. They had thought of Him as a revolutionary, a military leader who would set Israel free. But now it had all come to nothing. As they were easily recognisable as some of His followers, they feared imminent imprisonment and execution.

As they walked along Jesus came up by their side and asked them what they had been talking about and, very strangely, they did not recognise Him.

They told Him how this man, Jesus, had been crucified and the tomb found empty two days later, but they did not seem to have any understanding of the notion of resurrection. They said that "Perhaps the Romans had stolen the body to prevent any cult developing", and "Now was the time to get out of Jerusalem before the axe fell".

Still not recognising Jesus, he told them off and tried to explain to them what His suffering and death had all been about. It was all there in the scriptures.

The penny still hadn't dropped and, as it was late, they invited Him to stay and eat with them.

Then, whatever it was that happened, their eyes were opened when he blessed and broke the bread and gave it to them - and then he vanished. He was gone.

They rushed back to Jerusalem and told the rest of the Community that it really was true that he was alive. Then suddenly, there he was in the midst of them again, and eager to show them that he was not a ghost, but a real physical presence to be touched, felt, and that he could eat.

The story of Emmaus poses for us the problem of how very easy it is to fail to recognise the presence of the Divine in our midst.

Sometimes the burdens and troubles of our lives can bring us to the point of sadness or despair; that even though we are people of faith, we lose sight of the presence of Jesus walking with us, anxious to help, if only we could be aware and ask for His guidance.

One sure way to intensify, to sharpen up our awareness of the Lord's presence in our lives, is to try to grow closer to Him through daily prayer and the reading of the Scriptures.

It was only afterwards that the embarrassed disciples realised that the passages quoted to them by Jesus from the Scriptures, about Himself, did have an effect in their lives.

"Didn't our hearts burn within us as He talked to us and explained the Scriptures?"

They still did not recognise Jesus, but it seems that the very words of Scripture had some implicit power to start the ball rolling.

Likewise, with us. If we have the regular habit of prayer and reading the Scriptures, it becomes clear that we encounter the Lord in the routine ordinariness of daily life, in the relationships we establish and the work that we share together.

Here in the Mass, Jesus invites us to share in the Emmaus experience as we share the Eucharist with Him.

We bring to the mass the bread of the Joys and Sorrows of the week that has gone by. Christ breaks that bread with us and speaks to us as he spoke to those disciples on the road to Emmaus. In the words of the Mass and the Scriptures, he will throw light on every moment of Joy and show us that every bit of suffering has a purpose, giving us the motive and the strength to live a more deeply religious life. If we take the words in, they will begin to burn within our hearts.

As we share in the breaking of the bread with Christ in this Mass, we pray that our eyes can be opened so that we can see beyond the suffering of human living, to the Joy that is beside us, all around us and ahead of us.

Then we have the power and the energy to set out and proclaim the good news to those we will meet in the coming week.

That is the meaning of Emmaus for us.