

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Eastertide (A)

4<sup>th</sup> May 2014

'Emmaus and Eucharist'

Acts 2: *"You killed Him, but God raised Him to life."* Ps 15: *You will not leave my soul amongst the dead.* 1Pt 1: *Through Him you now have faith in God, who raised Him from the dead.* Lk 24: 13–35: the road to Emmaus

The Gospel reading today is a moving moment of encounter between the risen Jesus and two hitherto unknown disciples — not apostles, but other members of Jesus's circle. But it's not only an account of an event that gave new hope and faith to these two disciples who had been so despondent after Jesus's death and burial. I want to show you how it also ties in with the liturgy: it ties in with the Mass, and shows us how our life as Christians, (believing in the risen Lord), and our celebration of the liturgy, (coming to Mass), are intimately connected. You can't have one without the other. Believing in the risen Jesus leads directly to celebrating the Mass. Let me explain ...

1. **Penitential Rite.** The encounter on the road to Emmaus begins with the despondency of the disciples. They are unclear about what to think, where to go, how to go on. Jesus meets them where they are, and accepts their uncertainties. He listens to their tale, to their heartfelt

outpouring, and doesn't interrupt them. So too, when we first begin Mass we begin by pouring out our hearts to Jesus, telling Him of our situations, admitting our uncertainties, sins and omissions. We call this the Penitential Rite: we acknowledge our sins, yet we know that in Christ we find a favourable hearing; He listens and is merciful.

2. **Scripture.** The next thing that happens in this episode is that Jesus uses the Scriptures. He 'starts with Moses and goes through all the prophets' to show how God's plan from the beginning led up to Himself, to the Christ, who must suffer so as to enter into glory. To Jesus, the Scriptures are very important, for they are the record of God's love for His people from the beginning; how He has led mankind gradually to know Him better and better. In the Mass, of course, we hear the readings from Scripture and meditate on them; we should listen acutely to the word of God, for in it God speaks to us in all sorts of ways. At times, as long as we are listening, He will address a powerful word to us, which may change our life.
3. **The homily.** And then Our Lord "explains the passages." He unpacks the message of Scripture, and leads them to understand it in its fullness. Later on, they admit that 'their

hearts burned within them as He talked to them on the road.’ This opening-up of Scripture occurs in the Mass as the homily: a time to apply what Scripture teaches to our own everyday circumstances and lives; to encourage us not to be despondent but precisely to have our hearts ‘burning within us’ — on fire with love for Our Lord and God.

4. **The Intercessions.** As we reach the midpoint of the event, Jesus makes as if to go on; yet they press Him to stay. They have heard His message and they desire Him to remain: “Stay with us, Lord.” This expresses what we do in the Intercessions (the Bidding Prayer): we ask that the Lord remain with us in our lives and necessities, close to us, defending us, blessing and protecting us.
5. **The Liturgy of the Eucharist.** And then, the high point: ‘the breaking of bread.’ In this action and Sacrament, which Jesus offers in their home, their eyes are opened and they recognise Him. For, He offers again that which He had offered at the Last Supper and on the Cross: His very self. The signs of bread and wine are transformed into the Eucharist which is Jesus Himself. This is the heart of each Mass, when Our Lord becomes truly present on the altar. They no longer have need of the physical sight of His

glorified body, for they know that He is with them, truly and substantially, in the Blessed Sacrament that He has made present in their midst.

6. **The Dismissal.** Finally, then, there is the mission, the journey out full of joy and energy. They return to the apostles, full of enthusiasm, full of faith in the risen Lord, to begin their mission as witnesses to His life and Resurrection. We have this mission in the closing words of the Mass: “*Ite, missa est!*” — “Go forth, you are sent!” We are meant, at the end of Mass, to sense the mission that we have to take Christ out to the world.

So, living Mass well *is* living/journeying with Risen Jesus; it is the continuation of our closeness with Him, and His intentions for us. In this encounter of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus shows us that the Mass is *the* way to be with Him in His Resurrection, the incomparable way of staying with Him. “Stay with us, Lord” ... *Stay with us in the Eucharist, explain to us Your Scriptures, Your plan, Your love for us; give us reverence and love for Your true presence in the Eucharist; and send us out as Your witnesses to all humanity.*