

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter 2020

We have a phrase about saving the best until the last and that could apply to today's gospel which is the last resurrection story that we will hear this Easter season, and for many it is the best. The experience of the two disciples desperate to put distance between themselves and the terrible events that had happened in Jerusalem is a very real one for so many people today, whether this is fleeing from injustice and oppression, from an abusive relationship, from grinding poverty or from other experiences which keep people enslaved. They, like the disciples want to get away. In the gospel story they are joined on the way by a third person, whom we know to be Jesus, but they don't. Because we know it is Jesus what follows is full of irony.

Jesus asks a seemingly innocent question about what they were discussing and they tell him about what had happened to Jesus, saying that he, the one they were describing, must be the only person not to know! Then the phrase, 'our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free.' There is such a lot here to ponder because it suggests that freedom for them meant getting rid of the occupying Roman troops and returning to the sort of great nation status the people had enjoyed under King David, a thousand years before. But that would have involved violence, it would have been a case of victory for them and defeat for their enemies. And we think of the people who today are living with the reality of war or under the threat of war. Finally, they tell Jesus about the empty tomb and a vision of angels. They are locked into a mind set and when this happens we need help to see things another way. This is what Jesus does by interpreting their scriptures in terms of himself as the Christ, not the warrior Messiah reeking vengeance through the sword but the Suffering Servant Messiah prepared to go to the cross to demonstrate his love.

They have still much to learn which they do in the context of a meal, such a feature of Luke's gospel. Jesus accepts their invitation to stay and now at table he takes the lead, taking, blessing, breaking and giving the bread, actions which lead to recognition even though he is no longer physically present - words and action we use at every celebration of the Mass. Having recognised him in the breaking of bread they also recognised him in his breaking open of the scriptures for them. 'Did not our hearts burn within us... as he explained the scriptures to us.' This recognition brings about a turn around and they return to Jerusalem where their experience of the risen Jesus is confirmed.

Our own hope had been...depending on our circumstances our response will differ. Positively, hope that the planet will recover from the pandemic; parents, hope that the schools will open, for those no longer getting an income, hope that they were be able to work, for those self-isolating, hope that they will have company and so forth. For those further afield, hope for peace, for justice, for food, for safety, for shelter, for a future which is better than the past. As we live in the present moment, which is all we have, we hope that the one who walked with the disciples on the road to Emmaus is walking with us even if we don't recognise him, helping us to change for the better.

## Bidding Prayers for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter

Celebrant:

The risen Jesus appears to the disciples on the road and reveals himself in the scriptures and the breaking of the bread as he does to us, challenging us to live with renewed hope.

Reader:

For the Church – that it will always encourage people to read the scriptures and to be challenged and encouraged to live gospel values.

Lord in your mercy

For the leaders of nations – that they will listen attentively to the deepest needs and longings of the people they serve, especially the poor and those unjustly treated.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have lost their way in their journey through life, those who have no hope and those who are depressed – that once again their hearts might burn within them as they hear words of encouragement from friend or stranger.

Lord in your mercy

For all those who continue to be affected by the coronavirus – those who have died, those near to death, those who are fearful of being infected, and those who give themselves selflessly to care for them in hospitals, care homes and the community.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident and natural disaster, for Stan Bowes who died recently and Ethel Davies, Alice Ardern, Michael Murphy, Ian Peter Johnson, and Thomas McGreal whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

All loving God you open our hearts to your truth which you promise will set us free. As we walk the path of life help us to recognise the presence of your Son moving us to reach out to those in most need.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen