

3rd Sunday of Easter

Year A

GOSPEL

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Two of the disciples of Jesus were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. He said to them, 'What matters are you discussing as you walk along?' They stopped short, their faces downcast.

Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, 'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days.' 'What things?' he asked. 'All about Jesus of Nazareth' they answered 'who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of 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 it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they did 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.'

Then he said to them, 'You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter 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.

When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. 'It is nearly evening' they said 'and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them 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?'

They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, 'Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

(Luke 24:13-35)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The exact site of the town of Emmaus is not known to archaeologists.
- The early church referred to the Eucharist as 'the breaking of bread' (Acts 2:42).
- This gospel text reflects the structure of the Mass: Jesus first opened the Scriptures (the Liturgy of the Word) and then broke bread (the Liturgy of the Eucharist).

EXPLORING THE WORD

Much of Luke's Gospel is taken up by the account of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem to the cross. In this gospel, the two disciples have turned their backs on that event and are journeying away from the salvation that was won by Jesus there. All they can see is the confusion and disappointment of their failed hopes and expectations. They thought that Jesus was the Messiah but he died an ignoble death on the cross! They do not even recognise him as he walks beside them. They thought they knew what sort of Messiah he was. But Jesus does not abandon them. He continues his instruction of the disciples through the Scriptures, and their hearts burn within them. They continue to be open to hearing the truth and their doubts are overcome. They finally come to recognise that Jesus is present with them in the breaking of the bread.

- Do you fear that the demands of following Jesus will be too much for you? Are you tempted to turn your back and walk away?
- Talk about the ways in which the Scriptures and coming together to break bread in community can help to keep you on the road of faith and commitment.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- What sense do you have of Jesus walking by your side?
- 'Did not our hearts burn within us ...?' What resonance does this phrase have with how you feel now?
- Reflect back on how the unlocking of the message of the Scriptures helped you in your journey to faith.
- Have there been times in your life when you have failed to recognise a truth or just couldn't see something clearly? What or who helped to open your eyes? Share your reflections.
- Tell something of your story of 'what happened on the road' to someone this week. Share the good news.
- Use today's gospel acclamation as your prayer:

*Lord Jesus, make your word plain to us;
make our hearts burn with love when you speak.*