

**April 23, 2023**  
**Cycle A –3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter**

Acts 2:14, 22-33

Psalm: 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11

1 Peter 1:17-21

Luke 24:13-35

**Notes from Bishop Peter**

This Sunday's Gospel is the story about Jesus' journey with two disciples on the road to Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. St. Luke, its author, tells us that one is named Cleopas. Perhaps the other was his wife. ( Incidentally I suggest that you read the full text.

These disciples are deeply discouraged about what happened to Jesus. Suddenly he joins them but they don't recognize him. When he asks them what they were discussing, Cleopas is surprised that the stranger didn't know what had happened to Jesus in Jerusalem. Thus Cleopas speaks of the hopes they had, that Jesus the Messiah, would set Israel free from Roman rule. He goes on to say that "some women of our group found his tomb empty and angels had said that he was alive. Him, however, they did not see."

Then Jesus chides them for not understanding the Scriptures about the Messiah who had to suffer and die before entering into his glory. Jesus then goes through the words of Moses and the Prophets and interprets to them what they taught about him.

When they reach their destination, Jesus starts to go on but they request that he stay with them.

During a meal together, Jesus takes bread, blesses and breaks it and gives it to them. Immediately their eyes are opened and they recognize him. At this point Jesus vanishes from their midst.

They then become aware of how their "hearts were burning when Jesus interpreted the scriptures to them." In haste they return to Jerusalem where they find the Apostles who tell them that Jesus did in fact rise from the dead and had appeared to Simon Peter. Then the two disciples recounted their experience on the road and how Jesus had made himself known to them in the breaking of bread. Incidentally this was the oldest description of the Eucharist.

Let's go over some of the details of this compelling story. First, Jesus opens the Scriptures to them. Saint Luke doesn't give us any specifics but he must have

spoken about the 53rd chapter of the Prophet Isaiah where we read, “We like sheep have gone astray, each of us to our own way. And God placed on him the iniquity of us all.” The Prophet goes on to say that because of his obedience and what he suffered, he would enter into God’s glory.

The disciples ask Jesus to stay with them. Though they didn’t recognize him, they must have felt in their hearts that he was a very special man. This is a good lesson for us. We should ask Jesus to remain with us, above all when we suffer. Actually, he promised to be with us always. The words from the Book of Revelation are important in this context: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”

Then they recognized him in the “breaking of the bread.” From that moment on, the Apostles and disciples would recognize Jesus present in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. This story encourages us to do the same.

Jesus didn’t come to liberate his people from Roman imperialism but rather to liberate us from our sins and guilt and give us the power to love others, to forgive them and to build communities in which each person is respected and cherished, no matter who they are. These communities would cause ripple effects, leading many oppressors to question their ways and motives. Change would happen without violence. One thinks here of William Wilberforce in England whose conviction that the slave trade was immoral led others to accept the truth and abolish it. Also of how the Filipino people in 1986 rallied non-violently to oust Ferdinand Marcos.

Finally, just as the two disciples bore witness to Jesus in their lives, so must we by letting Jesus continue to live his life in us with greater freedom. This may cause others to remark, “Were not our hearts burning as we interacted with them?”

Amen.