

EYES AND MINDS OPENED! HEARTS SET ABLAZE!

(Luke 24:13-35)

Let Us Pray:

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord is risen!
He is risen indeed!

Myopia is condition of near sightedness or blurry vision, and Heartburn is... well we all know what that is! The reason I mention this that today's Gospel speaks of this condition, not of the physical variety but of the spiritual variety.

When Jesus was crucified, dead, and buried, his disciples thought that he was gone forever, and they were on their own. All their hopes were dashed. They didn't know what to do. They were in the depths of despair, hopelessness, and sadness. They were so mixed up and upset couldn't see things clearly or remember Jesus saying several times that it was necessary for him to die and rise again!

Two of Jesus' disciples were sadly walking back from Jerusalem, on that first Easter afternoon, to their home in the village of Emmaus when they were met by a "stranger" going along the same road, and began to speak to him about all that had occurred in the Holy City during the previous week.

This "stranger" listened to their grief, their dejection, their shock and horror, the trauma of what had happened, of how Jesus, a good man, a prophet, a man powerful before God and all the people, of how he had been crucified and buried, and how his body had disappeared from the tomb. This "stranger" responded by taking them on a journey through the Scriptures. He explained to them:

"This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem."

He explained to them that it was God's plan to redeem the world through the suffering of the Christ and so bring:

- forgiveness and joy,
- strength and hope,
- wholeness and salvation, and life renewed.

When the sun was beginning to set they arrived at their home and invited this “stranger” to stay with them. The King James version uses the words “**Abide with us**” which closer expresses the Greek meaning of the word, which implies “stay and continue to explain Scripture, and continue to put the pieces together.” Which is what Jesus did, concluding with the breaking of bread.

All of a sudden they could see and understand clearly! The Holy Spirit opened their eyes and minds! They saw and understood something clearly that they hadn't seen or understood before even though they had been with Jesus most of the day.

They realised that this “stranger” was really Jesus whom they had seen crucified, dead, and buried! Jesus was alive and well, and was with them! They ran back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples.

Like these disciples, most of us have experienced times of despair, a time when it feels as if all of life is falling to pieces around us.

Each of us has known, and know in these COVID-19 days:

- **times of anguish and despair,**
- **times when we have felt all alone,**
- **times of confusion and pain and uncertainty.**

Like the disciples we can feel really mixed up and not see things clearly. But we need not despair. Jesus is with us, and through his Word the Holy Spirit opens our eyes, to see and hear Jesus say to us:

“Where two or three gather in my name, there I am in the midst of them.”

And, furthermore, he says to us today:

“I will never leave you or forsake you.”

Through his Spirit, Jesus helps us to understand that we are greatly loved by God and that there is nothing to be afraid of. Jesus is with us, and will be with us at all times in our journey of life, because we are beloved children of God, as the apostle John [1 John 3:1-2] explains:

¹See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

And He continues to assures us[Is 43:1a-3]:

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.

***When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.
For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour."***

"We praise you Lord -- for being with us as we journey through life. -- Help us to recognize your presence -- and to rejoice at all times. -- We ask it in Jesus' name. -- **Amen.**"

Sermon by Pastor John Simboras
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