

## Homily. 3rd Sunday of Easter. Year. B. 13/14 April 2024.

The action in the gospel tells us about the return of two of Jesus followers to Jerusalem and to the other disciples of the Lord. The setting is the afternoon and evening of the first Easter Day. These two had headed away from the group, making for a town called Emmaus. Their journey began sadly as they were filled with confusion and doubts. They'd placed their hope for Israel's freedom in Jesus, God's Prophet, and they were around when Jesus had died. Then, early that Sunday, they'd heard the story of the women who had been to the tomb saying that Jesus was alive, but it's clear that they didn't believe what they'd been told. Hopes dashed and feeling very confused by the last few tragic days they'd decided to escape from all of the drama and threats to their lives.

On their journey a stranger had come up beside them, asking what they were discussing. Listening to their story of sadness and defeat, he then spoke about the scriptures and joined the dots for them. A new glimmer of hope began to take hold of these two deflated disciples. They then invited him to stay and join them for dinner which for them soon became a meal marked with Eucharistic symbolism. This opened the eyes of their minds and hearts to who the stranger really was; Jesus alive with them!

Despite the onset of darkness they rushed back with their Good-News to the Jerusalem community, which is where we now take up this Easter story. As they were still talking the Risen Lord suddenly stood among them all, offering them his peace. After proving that he was no ghost or zombie or another form of disembodied spirit, Jesus opened up the words of the scriptures and explained God's plan to them all, just as he had

done earlier for the Emmaus travellers. Lastly, he challenged his followers to take up their new mission; that of giving witness to him and all God had done and would keep on doing for the new life and salvation of the world.

Easter truly was the dawning of a new age for humanity, the age of the Holy Spirit, the age we're living in now. It brought to an end the old age in which sin, guilt, death and meaninglessness held sway, replacing it with the power of Jesus alive, making his home in us who believe and accept him. Our 'new commandment' is to give witness to the truth of the love of God for us which with time is perfected in us as we grow to become more like what we have seen, heard, believed, celebrated and received.

We heard in the 1st reading that Peter quickly got going on this mission. Soon enough the others did too. This changed them from disciples who learn into apostles who teach about the Lord, leading people to God's merciful heart in the grace and freedom of Christ. No longer are we then only listen and receive. Now we are authorised to speak, act, teach and share the Lord in our words and deeds and way of living. The gift of the Eucharist and our faith isn't just for observing and taking in. It's for living it's meaning and for giving to others however we're able. This is the unstoppable source of that renewed youthfulness of spirit we prayed for in the Opening Prayer. For even now, today, with the many challenges that we face we are, as God's sons and daughters, able to feel confident in our hope and rejoice in the great day of resurrection since we are sure that our redeemer lives and that in our own flesh we shall see God.