**Thursday in the Easter Octave, 2020**

The days between the resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit 50 days later, at Pentecost are known as **Eastertide**. The gospel readings in the principal services are the accounts of how the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples. One of the most powerful is his encounter with two of them **as they walked on the evening of Easter Sunday from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a neighbouring village.**



**Luke 24.13-33**

**“**13Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. 18Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” 19He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. 22Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” 25Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! **26Was it not necessary that the Messiahshould suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” 27Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.** 28As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So, he went in to stay with them. **30When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him;** and he vanished from their sight. 32They said to each other, **“Were not our hearts burning within uswhile he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” 33That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem;** and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” 35Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.”

**Ways of Meeting the Risen Jesus**

**In Holy Scripture**

The wo disciples were tired as they set out on the road to Emmaus and their disappointment is obvious. They had expected great things from Jesus of Nazareth, but it had all ended in death and defeat. Yet the mysterious stranger who walked with them lifted their spirits. He gave them a new key to open the holy books they had always known, shining a light on the Hebrew Scriptures, beginning with Moses and then working through the prophets. Their hearts burnt within them, in the presence of the living Word! **The risen Jesus himself is that key.** He opens the sealed books of the Old Testament to show us the truth of what St Augustine said: the new lies hidden in the old, and the old is revealed in the new. On the journey along life’s road, the risen Christ accompanies us, explaining Scripture to us as we read and pray together.

**In the Eucharist**

But it was only as they sat at table, when Jesus took the bread and did what all Jews did – blessing his God and Father and breaking it for them – that they understood that it was he. In that very moment he vanished from their sight – or perhaps to put it better, he became invisible to them. As he had done at the Last Supper, and as the Christian community has done ever since, **the sign of the broken bread spoke of his presence and of his suffering - Jesus the “Lamb of God”, who carries away the sin of the world.** But the gift of his presence in Holy Communion is not some special sacred food that locks the community in on itself. **It is a meal designed for mission!** Therefore, the two disciples got up immediately from table and set out again, back along the road to Jerusalem, this time not dragging their feet in disappointment but impelled to share the Good News that Jesus is risen!

**In Personal Experience**

The stories of the appearances of Christ are not just accounts of past events. Each one of us, on our own personal journey with its failures and disappointments, is invited by him to stop and see. **The best way we can do that is by opening the Scriptures and listening for his voice – then by sharing in the breaking of the bread in our own Christian community.** Then we will discover, if we persevere in faith, in prayer, and in fellowship, that though he invisible, **he is anything *but* absent!** His word is very near to us, it is in our hearts and on our lips for us to carry it and announce it. His word becomes a fire burning in our hearts.

**Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

