

### THOUGHTS FOR EASTER 3

It may be that people feel Easter has passed, after all the bunnies have been found and the Easter eggs consumed. Though as a by line to that, I recall meeting two very well behaved little girls, when I was a slightly older, but not necessarily well behaved girl. They astounded me when they said THEY made their Easter eggs last till Whitsun. I'm not sure if I was horrified, or impressed at their self-discipline, or uncharitably thought they must have received an impossible number of the chocolate treats that Easter. But in a sense they were right, Easter does last till Whitsuntide, or Pentecost. We are still in the season where we focus on the Resurrection.

Today's Gospel does just that. It is another account of the appearances of the Risen Lord, this time from Luke's Gospel (24: 13- 35), it takes place at the end of the day of Resurrection. Cleopas and another disciple are walking towards Emmaus, a village about 7 miles from Jerusalem. They are discussing recent events and a stranger falls in with them and asks of what events they speak. The two are astonished and explain their sadness and dashed hopes, but also their perplexity at the empty tomb and the story from the women about angels and Resurrection. The still mysterious stranger then proceeds to give them a lesson about God's saving acts from Moses and the Prophets as they walk.

By now they've arrived at Emmaus and the two invite the stranger in as "it is almost evening" and obviously offered food and hospitality. Then, as the stranger blessed the bread and broke, it they recognised their guest as Jesus, who then promptly disappeared.

It was in doing and saying something familiar, that Jesus is recognised. In a similar way to the truth being revealed to Mary Magdalene when the supposed gardener speaks her name. In the breaking of bread Jesus is both revealed and recognised, and in these strange times when we are denied the Sacraments and Communion in particular, it is a thing to hold onto. For now we can look for sacramental moments in our daily lives. In this sense I go back to the old Catechism definition of a sacrament which is a "visible sign of an invisible grace". The church recognises no less than seven of these\*, but there is a wider interpretation which allows us to see in many things a visible presence of our unseen God at work in our world. What about the acts of love, sacrifice, courage and generosity we are seeing around us, the people who go the extra mile to help others, those in the frontline of caring for people with the virus, as well as other health problems, teachers dedicated to offering stability to many families? Or a sudden flash of beauty in nature? I could go on, there's a lot of it about. At this point I must emphasise that these acts are NOT Sacraments in themselves in the strict sense of the word, but that they have a sacramental quality, because they are signs of this invisible Grace, God at work inspiring and encouraging us at this time.

Another thing about this Gospel story is that Jesus meets the disciples precisely where they are. He doesn't confront them, or tell them they've got it wrong, or their faith isn't up to much. No, he joins them, hears their fears and disappointments. Over the length of the conversation he gently allows their eyes to be opened to the truth. If we allow him, he will do the same with us.

May the Risen Lord bring joy and hope to you in these difficult and worrying times.

Alice

\*eg Holy Communion, Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination, Marriage, Reconciliation and anointing the sick or dying.