

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Our Lord had twelve Apostles, seventy-two disciples, and many other followers, who accompanied him on his missionary journeys. They came with him to Jerusalem, and witnessed the sad, and, to them, the fatal events on Good Friday. However, today we have a beautiful account, of an event that happened on the first Easter Sunday.

Now two of the disciples, Cleopas and his friend, having given up all hope, were now returning home, depressed and sad. They must have found it hard to understand, how Jesus, who had worked so many miracles, and had even raised the dead to life, could allow his enemies to put him to death. They had no doubt as to who were responsible for the death of Jesus. But sadly, they had the Jewish idea of the Messiah, a Messiah who would give Israel a new earthly kingdom. And now, because he had been crucified, they had lost all hope. They were now mourning, not only the death of Jesus, but the death of their relationship with him.

Then a third man joined them on their journey. Cleopas and his friend were amazed that this man could have been in Jerusalem, and yet hadn't heard of what had happened there, the previous Friday. Meanwhile, the stranger helped the two disciples to make sense of the past, in a new light. And they respond by inviting him to stay with them. But, somehow, they still did not recognise Jesus.

Now, Jesus had risen in his glorified body, entirely different from that laid in the tomb. He appeared in various visible forms, sometimes recognisable, as when he appeared to the apostles, to convince them of the truth of his resurrection. And sometimes not recognisable, as when he met Mary Magdala, and later, when he met Cleopas and his friend. Mary recognized Jesus by his voice, when he called her "*Mary*". Whereas the two disciples recognised him in the "*breaking of bread*".

The two disciples remembered how his conversation with them had set their hearts afire, with love for Him and for the Father who had sent him. And now their despair was over because they took the light of Easter Sunday back into the darkness of Good Friday. And therefore, they returned to their vocation, placing themselves under the direction of the Apostles. Whereupon, they found the Apostles were already convinced of the resurrection, for they said, "*the Lord has risen indeed and appeared to Simon*". And thus, the two disciples' story was a confirmation of the acknowledged fact that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Jesus came to Cleopas and his friend when their faith was weakening. He lifted them up, by revealing the scriptures to them. He brought them alive through the breaking of bread. Then, he left them with hearts that burn and with eyes that see.

When we gather here each week to celebrate the eucharist, we too listen to the word of God and break bread together. Jesus comes among us not as a stranger, rather he comes to us in word and sacrament to give us new hope, a hope to face the future with a deeper faith in him.