

## EASTER 3 YEAR 1

Our scripture lessons today have one common, encouraging, thread. No matter what happens in our lives, the risen Jesus is always with us.

God is always near to those who seek Him and want to live in His presence doing His will.

The first reading comes from the Acts of the Apostles, its chief purpose is to tell how Jesus first followers, led by the Holy Spirit, spread the good news about him initially in Jerusalem and then into the pagan territories

In today's passage we hear how, filled with the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, Peter began his first public proclamation about Jesus. Explaining how God raised Jesus from the dead; thus fulfilling the messianic prophecies about the promised descendant of the King and Prophet David. This is the first and the longest of Peter's 5 discourses as preserved in the Acts of the Apostles.

Peter skillfully connects Jesus with these prophecies, quoting Psalm 16 which asserts that David foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ.

The second reading is from the letter of Peter to the Christians who were scattered throughout the northern part of Asia Minor. (now turkey) Peter's main purpose was to encourage the readers who were facing suffering and persecution for their faith.

Peter exhorts them to place their faith and hope in God, who has saved them through the precious Blood of His Son and who raised Jesus from the dead, and that Jesus death and resurrection was part of God's saving plan for all eternity.

Luke's Gospel was written towards the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century for Christians who had not witnessed Christ in the flesh. Luke reminds us that, just like the disciples in today's passage, the place where we most recognize Jesus is in his word and in the breaking of the bread.

We are not sure why the two disciples were headed for Emmaus we assume that the events involving Jesus death had left them discouraged and devastated and they were returning back to their village and their previous way of life.

Perhaps the fact that Luke leaves one of the disciples unnamed, is an invitation to each one of us to step into the shoes of this anonymous traveler on the way to our own Emmaus. The place where we flee to, to escape from the painful episodes in our lives.

Emmaus was 7 miles from Jerusalem and the disciples were walking home.

Along the way Jesus joins them, although, at first, they did not recognize Him.

The passage describes how they discussed so much with Jesus and how he responded, the importance of this event is how it illustrates that the road to Emmaus is a road of

companionship with Jesus. Perhaps like the two disciples we do not at first realise that Jesus accompanies us on our road of troubles, disappointments and devastation. We recognize His presence only when our eyes are opened through faith.

Another great encounter with Jesus, totally different, was Saul of Tarsus, now the Apostle Paul. Jesus got his attention by knocking him off his horse and rendering him temporarily blind. Paul's eyes were opened when he realized the truth about Jesus and became one of His greatest Apostles.

So what does the Emmaus story tell us?

The Fathers of the Church note how well the Emmaus story matches our process of coming to faith in Jesus. First there are questions and a search for answers. Then comes a moment of discovery when our eyes are opened and our hearts within begin to burn with longing, finally there is the desire to tell the story to all who will listen.

The risen Lord meets us on the road to our Emmaus in the ordinary circumstances of our lives. Often when our dreams and hopes are shattered. Today we realise that the Emmaus story gives us hope that the risen lord will come to us , perhaps in unfamiliar guises to support and strengthen us when we least expect Him.

As I said earlier our road to Emmaus is a road of companionship. Jesus is present in our midst and wants to

be our friend, to join us in our travels through life, to comfort us and help us

The Emmaus story is a great message, an example, of how we can experience Jesus in every day of our lives

So let us pray that our own eyes and hearts will be opened, as we gather here today, perhaps on our own road to Emmaus, and recognize Jesus in his word and in the breaking of the bread (Eucharist)