

FAITH & GENEROSITY REFLECTION

THE WALK TO EMMAUS Year A – Easter 3 – Luke 24:13-35

The Walk to Emmaus

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then 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?' ¹⁹ He 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, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But 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. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and 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. ²⁴ Some 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.' ²⁵ Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But 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. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The Walk to Emmaus

As we know, Luke's account concerns the Resurrection, but it also speaks about hospitality and recognition.

Jesus draws near, but the disciples do not recognise Him. They walk with sorrow, confusion, and disappointment. Even though Jesus is with them, they still cannot see him. The disciples greet and welcome the stranger long before they fully recognise who he is, and they offer their hospitality. It is through their generosity, their welcome, that they come to discover His identity.

So we are bound to ask: where do we see Him? He may be closer than we realise, yet we may fail to recognise Him because our vision is blurred by grief, busyness, fear, in short, life's many preoccupations.

There is a story about a little boy who wanted to meet God. He packed his bag with Smarties and cans of Coke and set off on his journey. Then he met an old lady sitting in the park. He saw she was hungry and he shared his food.

They sat quietly together. They smiled at one another. And at the end of the day, the little boy went home and said, "I had lunch with God... she's got the most beautiful smile I've ever seen." And the old lady said to her neighbour, "I ate Smarties in the park with God... he's much younger than I expected."

Jesus is recognised in fellowship - the disciples' eyes are opened in the breaking of bread, in the welcome, in the shared meal. They recognise Him not through anything dramatic, but through their attentiveness, kindness and generosity - their willingness to welcome the stranger. Christian generosity begins here: not as a grim duty or out of fear that our lack of generosity will have eternal consequences, but as a response from hearts awakened by the generosity of God.

Their recognition leads to action: their hearts burn within them, they set out immediately for Jerusalem, and we see what happens when hearts are truly set on fire by the presence of Jesus.

Luke tells us that once we recognise Him, we can never be the same again; our encounters will spur us into action, motivated not by fear of tomorrow, but by the joy of the mission. The Spirit of the risen Jesus walks with us through Scripture, in the Eucharist, in friends and in strangers, and in our hearts. We find that when we recognise Him, fear begins to fade, love takes its place, and generosity no longer feels like an obligation but becomes a joyful response.

So the question is, do we see generosity as a burden or as a response to grace? Emmaus reminds us that generosity is not based on necessity: it is rooted in the generosity of God. It is about a life filled with the generosity of Christ: generous in welcoming others, generous in love, generous in attention, generous in time, generous in service, and indeed, generous also in giving.

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There is a story that John Cassian (c. AD 360 – c. 435) recounts, which resonates with how the disciples recognised Jesus through hospitality, and it emphasises the importance of welcoming others. Cassian and Germanus are surprised that an elder breaks the normal fast to receive travelling brothers, and the elder replies that fasting is always available later, but the duty of charity is present now; indeed, in welcoming the guest, he is receiving Christ.

“CHAPTER XXIV: How in Egypt we saw that the daily fast was broken without scruple on our arrival. When we had come from the region of Syria and had sought the province of Egypt, in our desire to learn the rules of the Elders, we were astonished at the alacrity of heart with which we were there received so that no rule forbidding refreshment till the appointed hour of the fast was over was observed, such as we had been brought up to observe in the monasteries of Palestine; but except in the case of the regular days, Wednesdays and Fridays, wherever we went the daily fast was broken: and when we asked why the daily fast was thus ignored by them without scruple one of the elders replied: *"The opportunity for fasting is always with me. But as I am going to conduct you on your way, I cannot always keep you with me. And a fast, although it is useful and advisable, is yet a free-will offering. But the exigencies of a command require the fulfilment of a work of charity. And so receiving Christ in you I ought to refresh Him but when I have sent you on your way I shall be able to balance the hospitality offered for His sake by a stricter fast on my own account. For 'the children of the bridegroom cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them:' but when he has departed, then they will rightly fast."*¹

¹ <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/350705.htm> - Chapter 24