

THE EMMAUS SERIES

5th Sunday Easter, Year A

Acts 6:1-7

1 Peter 2:4-9

John 14:1-12

To have seen me is to have seen the Father

During the Easter Season, the Church seeks a greater appreciation of all that the Saviour's Resurrection means for the human family. Christ's Resurrection is far more than his coming back to life. It is nothing less than the final achievement of God's work of creation. It is God's intention that, ultimately, the whole human family, together with creation itself, shall be caught up in this great event. To help us find a fuller understanding of this truth, the gospel reading of the Easter liturgies have been taken from the treasures of John's gospel. Today's reading takes us to the heart of this gospel's understanding of the Saviour and what he came to give the world.

The second reading, from the letter of Peter, serves as a splendid complement to our gospel reading. Peter describes the achievement of the Saviour in biblical terms - his words echo, no doubt, the first Christian preaching, as it presented the Risen Lord as the fulfilment of Old Testament hopes. Peter refers to a verse of the processional psalm we met last week (Ps 118:22): 'The Lord is the living stone, rejected by men, but chosen by God', to become the 'keystone' of God's work. This stone is proving a 'stumbling block' to unbelievers; but it is precious to God; and those who are believers recognise in him the realisation of Israel's hopes. Peter sums up these hopes in a series of biblical allusions. The Lord's promise to Moses on Sinai - 'Out of all peoples, you shall be my personal possession. For me you shall be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation' (Exod 19) - has now been fulfilled. United in the Risen Lord, believers are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood' offering 'the spiritual sacrifices which Jesus Christ has made acceptable to God'.

It is good to nourish our faith and hope in this way, from the long biblical tradition of God's dealings with his people. The gospel of John, however, brings us a presentation of what the Saviour can mean for us in a different key. The great disciple of Jesus who inspired the deep meditations of this gospel appeals to themes that speak to the common experience of humanity. In today's gospel we meet several of such themes. As we ponder them, we should recall that the Saviour is portrayed in the fourth gospel, bathed, as it were, in a subtle light that is the expression of his risen glory.

What 'way' should our personal journey take us, if we are to avoid life's frustrations and disappointments? - Jesus assures us that 'in him' our journey will lead to authentic life - 'I am the Way'. In a world filled with the voices of false hope and self-indulgence, where are we to find 'truth', a truth that we can 'see for ourselves'? - 'I am the Truth. To have seen me is to have seen the Father'. Where shall we find the 'place' where a truly loving welcome brings an end to our seemingly endless wandering? - 'I shall take you to my Father's house'. And, in the end, what manner of 'life' may we look forward to? - Something that is beyond the imagining of the human heart, nothing less than sharing all things with God - 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me'.

John Thornhill sm