

THE EMMAUS SERIES

3rd Sunday of Easter, Year B

Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

1 John 2:1-5

Luke 24:35-48

Resurrection faith brings healing to the whole world

The New Testament contains many accounts describing for us the experience of the original disciples of Jesus as they found faith through their encounter with their Risen Lord. The writers of the gospels are so certain of the meetings that laid the foundations of Christian faith that they do not attempt to harmonise the details of the stories they are handing on. They pass on these stories in order to share the wonder of finding faith and new purpose through an encounter with the Lord's triumph – a wonder that can hardly be captured by a single account.

As our Easter liturgies recall these stories we are like a family group listening to one another sharing personal recollections of a past even that meant a great deal to the whole family. Given from different points of view, these recollections bring a far fuller appreciation of what took place. Last Sunday we heard the story as it was recalled in the community of John's gospel. Today, we hear Luke's account of the disciples' meeting with the Risen Saviour. From all these accounts a coherent story emerges that invites the Church of every age to share in the original moment of Resurrection faith: the disciples are confused and frightened; when Jesus comes into their midst, finding faith in him is not easy and immediate; his greeting, however, and his loving acceptance of them into his abiding friendship brings them a great joy, and they find full faith in him; he instructs them – all that has taken place is according to the designs of God set forth in the Scriptures; he charges them with the mission of bringing to the whole world the good news of their Resurrection faith and the 'forgiveness of sins' it brings; he promises the gift of the Holy Spirit.

All three readings make reference to 'sin' and the need for conversion. Our immediate reaction may well be to think those are themes for Lent, why stress them in the midst of our Easter celebration? But can we understand what has been achieved in the Lord's Paschal Mystery without taking account of the reality of sin. It is the abuse of human freedom that has made the destructive world from which we need to be saved and set free. The words of Peter in the first reading suggest a line of thought which has relevance for the world in which we live. Quite rightly, our discussion of 'sin' usually stresses what is done with full and wilful responsibility. Peter points to another form of 'sin' when he acknowledges that the perpetrators of the terrible miscarriage of justice that has 'killed the prince of life' did not fully understand what they were doing. In today's world of confused moral values, who is to judge the moral guilt of many things that are done? But if what is done is a turning away from the light to darkness, from what leads to life to what leads to death, it is sinful in the sense that it is an aberration that has destructive consequences from which only God can save us.

Our mission - as those who have found Resurrection faith and the hope it brings - is to bring liberation from sinfulness in all its forms, by sharing the light and life of the Risen Lord with our struggling world.

John Thornhill sm