

THE EMMAUS SERIES

6th Sunday of Easter, Year C

Acts 15:1-2, 22-29

Apocalypse 21:10-14, 22-23

John 14:23-29

We shall come and make our home in him

The days in which the Risen Lord has shown himself to his disciples, leading them to full faith in him, are coming to an end – ‘I am going away, and shall return’. The disciples have come to recognise, that faith in what God has done for the world in Christ brings a daunting task: ‘As the Father sent me, so am I sending you’; ‘By this love you have for one another everyone will know that you are my disciples’.

That same task has been passed on to the Church of every age; but today’s gospel reading brings encouragement. The first disciples became aware of the extraordinary resources that had been given to them, as they took up their task..

‘Keeping the word’ of the Saviour had a practical meaning for them: putting into practice what the teaching and example of Jesus asked of them. But, whatever age they live in, the disciples of the Risen Lord do not take up this task alone. The Father and the Son ‘make their home’ in them. Have we really taken to heart all that these words we have heard so often really mean? We are invited to share the humble stories of our lives with these almighty, constant and merciful companions. As they took up their mission, the first disciples experienced the power of the Word of God. If we become familiar with the great story of the Scriptures, we shall find them a constant source of inspiration and strength - nourishment for our faith in every circumstance. But the greatest gift of all is the Holy Spirit, the full expression of the love and joy that unites the Father and Son dwelling in us. The Spirit of Christ living in us will ‘teach’ us the ways of God, ‘reminding’ us of all that the Saviour has given to the world. No matter how unworthy we may feel, we are invited to enter into the love of the Father, Son and Spirit ‘poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us’ (Rom 5), inviting us to journey confidently towards the final Kingdom, where they will be our eternal joy..

Last week, our reading from the Apocalypse spoke of the first Christians’ vision of the Church brought into existence by the Saviour’s Paschal Mystery, ‘the new Jerusalem, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband’. Today’s reading, a continuation of the same chapter, reminds us that the Church is the fulfilment of all the hopes of Israel – something we have tended to neglect in our Catholic awareness: twelve tribes, twelve gates, twelve apostles; filled with ‘the radiant glory of God and the Lamb’.

But today’s first reading from the Acts of the Apostles also reminds us that, with all its blessings and resources, the Church will still face practical problems in the carrying out of its mission – problems that must be patiently resolved, in a fraternal spirit open to the guidance that is promised from on high.

John Thornhill sm