



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

### **3rd Sunday of Easter Year A**

#### ***Abide with us***

Readings: *Acts 2: 14, 22-33, Ps 15, 1 Peter 1: 17-21, Luke 24: 13-35*

We are in the season of the Resurrection and every day's Gospel retails that extraordinary period of the Disciples' life and the movement toward Ascension and Pentecost and the birth of the Church. Today we rehearse and remember that extraordinary encounter that goes under the simple heading of 'The Emmaus Road'.

Not only is it, in textual terms, the longest account, but we can assess from the text itself that the encounter lasted in the region of two to three hours. This was no ephemeral vision, no momentary apparition. Can you imagine three hours in the Presence of the Risen Lord, three hours in conversation, three hours of education and revelation? Amazing.

We begin with two disciples walking away from Jerusalem. The great hope of the Messiah seems over. Jesus is dead. All their aspirations and longings buried with him. They are turning their back on the little group that will, in a few days, become the Church of God. It is not an uncommon feature of the spiritual journey to walk away when things do not work out for us in the way we had hoped. But note this. They have not stopped talking about Jesus. And as they do so, Jesus draws near to them and walks with them.

That is a law of discipleship that has not changed in two thousand years. Wherever disciples, good times, bad times, are seeking to understand the mystery of Calvary in their own lives, Jesus draws near and walks with us. Notice also how Jesus approaches them. He does not instruct them initially, rather he asks them to tell their story. And they do just that.

Very often in Evangelism we can't wait to tell people how it should be without ever listening to them first. It's no good telling people Jesus is the answer if we haven't listened properly to their questions and struggles. Jesus listens to his struggling people. When He responds, it is not mealy mouthed.

Jesus does what few parish priests would dare to do. He calls them 'fools'. They are fools because they have not believed the witness of the faithful. The womenfolk at the tomb have told them and they do not believe – like Thomas they do not trust other disciples but require nothing less than personal revelation. Nor have they understood the Holy Scriptures. And here an extraordinary thing happens. Jesus explains to them the meaning of what we now call the Old Testament. He explains how all that has happened is a fulfilment of the sovereign purposes of God.

This teaching is hugely significant for two reasons.

- 1) It is the basis of the Church's understanding of Holy Scripture and its meaning.
- 2) There are no written details of what Jesus actually said in those three hours. The Church knows and teaches it by 'holy tradition'.

So we know, from this account, that Scripture and Tradition work together. The Word of God and the Tradition of the Church are inseparable.

This teaching will be confirmed to all the disciples, at the end of this Gospel when they reconvene in Jerusalem, by Jesus Himself as He instructs them to await the Pentecost before evangelising the world.

Later these two blessed disciples will recall how their 'hearts burned within them' as the Scriptures were opened to them. Whenever we study God's Word under the teaching of the Church, something of that fire should rekindle on the altar of our hearts.

And then the critical moment. Jesus makes as if to go on. The disciples beg Him to stay. ('Abide with me' is the great hymn that commemorates that moment.) The mystery that remains at the heart of our Faith is then revealed.

Jesus takes the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them. Christ reveals Himself in the mystery of the Mass. He still does.

The reaction of the disciples is instantaneous. As night falls they hurry back to rejoin the little Church in Jerusalem – the Church which will sweep the world with the Good News of the Risen Lord.

It is the same Church of which we are the latest part, part of that universal and eternal family. It is the same Mass, the same teaching, the same Presence, the same Jesus, the same mission, the same world to win.