

Related topics

For further study:

Paschal mystery; eucharist; symbol of bread; word; baptism; hospitality; christology; confirmation; sacraments

Closing Prayer

God of mystery,
out of death you delivered Christ Jesus,
and he walked in hidden glory with his disciples.

Stir up our faith,
that our hearts may burn within us
at the sound of his word,
and our eyes be opened to recognize him
in the breaking of the bread.

Grant this through Jesus Christ, the first-born from the dead,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers · Easter 3A²

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² *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary* / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999,

The Third Sunday of Easter

Principal Service readings

Acts 2.14a,36-41	The first conversions
Psalm 116.1-3, 10-17 [or 116.1-7]	Thanksgiving and trust in God
1 Peter 1.17-23	Live in reverent awe and obedience
Luke 24.13-35	The road to Emmaus

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The Road to Emmaus

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

and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But 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. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They 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?' ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Luke 24.13-35 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

Although we are celebrating the Third Sunday of Easter, our reading today goes back to what happened on Easter Sunday. Emmaus was a small village not far from Jerusalem. Two disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, one is called Cleopas and the other is unnamed. There has been speculation that the unnamed disciple was a woman, as Luke shows a special concern for women in his gospel, often narrating a story about a woman before or after a story about a man. Perhaps we should be open to this possibility, anyway.

As the two disciples walk along, talking about the events in Jerusalem, they are joined by Jesus, but don't recognise him. Why don't they recognise him? Are they too focused on their story and puzzlement, or does God prevent them from recognising Jesus, or has Jesus changed in his appearance, or is the whole idea of resurrection too far beyond their understanding to contemplate?

Jesus acts as a catalyst for the two witnesses, prompting their story. The events of that resurrection morning as still very vivid to them, but confusing. They can't make sense of it all. Then Jesus, with the help of the scriptures, interprets the meaning for them. They were blind to the

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

reason for Jesus' suffering and death, but Jesus is able to turn their despondency into hope and faith. They are drawn in to what he says and urge him to stay longer with them.

Jesus joins them for a meal, and then in explicit eucharistic language, Luke writes: 'When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them' (v.30). Then, Luke tells us, Jesus vanished. So, the disciples came to know him 'in the breaking of the bread', thus illustrating in a very vivid way how subsequent Christians will come to know the risen Lord. As they reflect on their experience they realise that as Jesus was talking to them on the road, he was having such an impact on them that they say: 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' (v.32).

In their excited state, the two disciples rush back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples what has happened, and they discover that the Lord has appeared to Simon Peter. They relate their own story of what had happened on the road and of recognising Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

Quotations

1

The world does not consist of 100 percent Christians and 100 percent non-Christians. There are people (a great many of them) who are slowly ceasing to be Christians but who still call themselves by that name: some of them are clergymen. There are other people who are slowly becoming Christians though they do not yet call themselves so.

Mere Christianity / C. S. Lewis. 1952

2

The mass was what got to me, I knew as soon as I heard it, that it was an idea that I would not let go of. It gripped me. I thought, 'I was meant to find that.' It was the idea of a bridge between heaven and earth that was alive. It was somebody. It was Jesus, who you could actually eat. There is no closer bond than eating.

Les Murray, Australian poet, interviewed by Martin Wroe in the *Church Times*, 3 December 2010, p.20.