

## REFLECTIONS FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER ~ 23 April 2023

### The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

*May we, O Living Lord, in this reborn light,  
Shape a new relationship with the future,  
And meet you there, with all those in every conflict and hunger.*

These words from a poem-prayer by Roddy Hamilton speak so beautifully to the heart of the Resurrection stories – the ordinary of our lives remains, but for those who are Resurrection people the ordinary becomes extraordinary! In today's narrative from Luke's Gospel, we see this happen for Cleopas and Mary, two disciples on the road to Emmaus. A simple walk home, a supper meal, and a walk back to Jerusalem – everyday happenings in their lives – are transformed and a new relationship with the future is shaped. Let us reflect now on the transformation of the path of the lives of Mary and Cleopas. The spiritual writer, [Jan Richardson](#), writes that every step of this happening is "Blessing":

Already a blessing in the walking  
already a blessing on the road  
already a blessing drawing near  
already a blessing in the listening  
already a blessing in the burning hearts  
already a blessing in the almost evening  
already a blessing in the staying  
already a blessing at the table  
already a blessing in the bread  
already a blessing in the breaking  
already a blessing finally known  
already a blessing give us eyes  
already a blessing let us see.

**A simple walk home** – Cleopas and Mary are walking home from Jerusalem in the late afternoon of the first day of the week. They are brokenhearted, discouraged, in despair. The one whom they believed would be the Messiah has been crucified and has died. To make matters even more upsetting, some of their women friends are insisting that they found Jesus' tomb empty and that angels there told them Jesus was alive. As they trudge home with all hope gone, a stranger joins them. In the conversation with them, he seems to be trying to convince them that their holy books, their Hebrew scriptures, assure them that all of this makes sense, that there is hope in this moment of despair. I love the way in which William H. Willimona Methodist theologian, applies this to our lives, "If you want to experience the resurrection of Jesus Christ in your life, where you live, just get up in the morning and put one foot in front of the other and head down the road. Follow the way. But please, go with a bit of imagination. Walk with the expectation of the possibility of surprise."

**On the Road to Emmaus  
Icon by Sister Marie-Paul**



**A supper meal** – Even though Mary and Cleopas cannot make any sense of what Jesus is saying, they are gracious in inviting him to supper with them. Gracious hospitality to a stranger had been one of Jesus’ teachings while he walked on Earth (“I was a stranger and you welcomed me” – Matt 25:34). While they grieved his death, Mary and Cleopas are following this teaching little knowing that their simple act would be life-changing for them. Jan Richardson



Breaking Bread

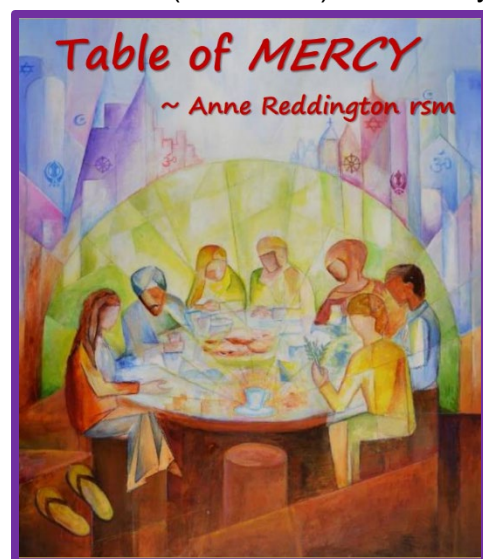
reminds us, “A shared table is a sacred space where we acknowledge, in the presence of others, that we are hungry: not only for the feeding of our bodies but also of our souls. There is a profound connection between eating and knowing. This knowing that we experience at the table comes both as a deep comfort and also a keen challenge. As Cleopas and his companion discovered on that evening in Emmaus, the presence of Christ persists when his followers gather to eat. Particularly in times of confusion

and grief, his presence at the table comes as comfort and solace indeed.”

Veronica Lawson rsm echoes the same thought, “Extraordinary things can happen to those hospitable enough to ‘break bread’ with ‘strangers’ in whom they do not immediately recognise God’s presence. If we open our hearts to those who have sought a welcome on our shores and are still awaiting a path to permanency, we might come to participate more deeply in the joy of the resurrection.” As Jesus breaks bread with them, Cleopas and Mary realize who the stranger truly is!

**A walk back to Jerusalem** – Their first response to recognizing Jesus is the acknowledgement that they should have seen it the moment he began to speak about the Scriptures, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” (Lk 24:32). The second response is that this news is too good to keep! They turn around and go back to Jerusalem, to tell the disciples “what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread” (Acts 24:35). John Foley sj takes their message to the next step, “We see him in the breaking of the bread, but also and astoundingly in the breaking bones of the world.”

In 2013, the Archbishop who would become Pope Francis challenged us with these words, “We need a church able to dialogue with those disciples who, having left Jerusalem behind, are wandering aimlessly, alone, with their own disappointment, disillusioned by a Christianity now considered barren, fruitless soil, incapable of generating meaning...But we need to know how to interpret, with courage, the larger picture. Jesus warmed the hearts of the disciples of Emmaus.” Remember that Jesus not only reveals himself at the meal – he reveals himself to us in those with whom we eat. This week let us ask ourselves what we are hungry for, what kind of table hospitality we are giving or



receiving. Let us ask ourselves, “How is the table a place of comfort for us? a place of challenge for us? a place of knowing for us?”

**Emmaus and Earth Day** – As we read the Emmaus story, we hear Sister Elaine Wainwright’s teaching on the ecological dimensions of this narrative:

Materiality fills these narratives: details of time and place, eyewitness accounts. This Gospel speaks of resurrection as an enhanced experience of body and body in place, not as an escape from the body. They tell about the resurrection, setting the story in time and place – “early in the morning”, “two days since it all happened”, “at the tomb”. They describe the resurrection as material – not ethereal. Resurrection takes place in bodies and is encountered in and through bodies. And the encounters are not limited to human bodies but to other forms of life and matter around us. Our Emmaus journey can be to see more clearly that we are enmeshed in the communion of the planet and cosmos.

She challenges us to live the truth of Emmaus, that we not only see but we must recognize and discern, opening our eyes through words and actions of gratitude and hospitality. “As ecological readers, this means being attentive to the material – eyewitness to everything we see around us – but also maturing in our understanding so that we recognise the relationships that form the Earth community.”



Saturday, April 22, is Earth Day. Indeed, every day is Earth Day! This year, the theme is “Invest in our Planet” -- we need to act boldly, innovate broadly, and implement equitably – businesses, governments and citizens becoming a partnership for the planet. The *Laudato Si’ Movement* suggests three overall goals to achieve this partnership or Earth community:

- ✓ *Ecological Conversion* – To encourage a change of heart of the Catholic faithful and motivate a more passionate concern for our common home, enshrining creation care as a Catholic priority.
- ✓ *Full Sustainability* – To help the Catholic community lead by example by embodying the “Less is More” motto and shrinking its footprint to zero, in line with the urgency of the climate and ecological crises.
- ✓ *Prophetic Advocacy* – To mobilize the Church to raise a prophetic voice for climate and ecological justice, calling for bold policies to accomplish the Paris Agreement’s goal of 1.5C and halt biodiversity collapse.



We bring our reflections together with this prayer-poem from Steve Garnaas-Holmes:

Our deepest grief is not that we have lost what we loved  
but that in our aloneness our hearts burned within us  
and we didn't notice.

That as we walked through the shadowed valleys  
we were accompanied and didn't believe it.  
That we were in the presence of the holy and weren't aware.  
That we, too, because we are so beloved, are holy,  
and held in the umbilical arms of life and raised from death  
and don't even realize it.

Our deepest grief is the burning of our hearts,  
not a hankering back but a reaching forward,  
the labor pain of a birth unbirthed, a newness we haven't embraced yet,  
a resurrection we haven't yet made real.

As our holiness blossoms within us  
we allow ourselves to be led by the burning of our hearts,  
shedding what is expected of us – molting – and becoming, always newly becoming  
who were are created to be, real-izing resurrection.

We go back now to our opening words. The living Lord showers reborn light in our midst! There is little wonder that, at Pentecost in that first moment of our Church, Peter can reflect on Psalm 16 (both readings in today's Liturgy of the Word), "My heart is glad, and my soul rejoices. . . You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy" (Ps 16:9, 11 and Acts 2:28).

Let these words resonate in our lives this week with fullness of joy. Let us walk with the expectation of the possibility of surprise! Let us see the ordinary happenings in the path of our lives as truly extraordinary, lived in the presence of the Risen One! Let us trust that, because we are so beloved, we are holy!



[The Pilgrims of Emmaus on the Road](#), James Tissot