

## GOSPEL

*Luke 24:13-21, 25-33*

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. Then 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?' He 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, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel... Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But 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. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They 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?' They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their

companions, who said to them, 'Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

## HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

*26 April 2020*

Very often we have heard that Christianity is not merely a doctrine, nor a way of behaving, nor a culture. Yes, it is all this, but it is first and foremost an encounter. A person is Christian because he or she has encountered Jesus Christ, has let him or herself be encountered by Him.

This passage of the Gospel of Luke tells us about an encounter, so as to enable us to know better how the Lord acts and how we act. We are born with a seed of restlessness. God wants it thus: the restlessness of finding fullness, restlessness of finding God, very often always without knowing that we have this restlessness. Our hearts are restless, our hearts are thirsty: thirsty for the encounter with God. Our hearts seek Him, many times on the wrong paths: it gets lost, then it returns, it seeks Him... On the other hand, God thirsts for the encounter to the point that He sent Jesus to meet us, to come towards this restlessness.

How does Jesus act? In this passage of the Gospel (see *Lk 24, 13-35*), we see clearly that He respects our situation, He does not go ahead. Only at times, with the headstrong - think of Paul, when he is thrown down from the horse. But usually He goes slowly, respecting our pace. He is the Lord of patience. How much patience the Lord has with us, with each one of us!

The Lord walks next to us, as we have seen here with these two disciples. He listens to our restlessness, He knows it, and at a certain point He says something to us. The Lord likes to hear how we speak, to understand us well and to give the right answer to that disquiet. The Lord does not

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speed up His pace, He always keeps in step with us, very often slow, but His patience is thus.

There is an ancient rule of pilgrims, which says that the true pilgrim should go at the pace of the slowest person. And Jesus is capable of this, He does it, He does not speed up, He waits for us to take the first step. And when it is the right moment, He asks the question. In this case it is clear: "What are you discussing?" (see v. 17). He makes Himself appear ignorant to make us speak to Him. He likes it when we speak to Him. He likes to hear this, He likes us to speak to Him in this way, to listen to Him and to answer, He makes us talk. As if He were ignorant, but with great respect. And then He answers, He explains, up to the necessary point. Here He says to us: "Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into His glory?" Then "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them what referred to Him in all the scriptures" (v. 26). He explains, He clarifies. I confess that I am curious to know how Jesus explained, to do the same. It was a beautiful catechesis.

And then the same Jesus who has accompanied us, who has drawn close to us, pretends to go on further, to see the extent of our restlessness. "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over" (v. 29). And in this way we meet. But the encounter is not just a time to break bread here, but the entire journey. We meet Jesus in the darkness of our doubts, even in the ugly doubt of our sins, He is there to help us, in our anxieties... He is always with us.

The Lord accompanies us because He wants to meet us. That is why we say that the core of Christianity is an encounter: it is the encounter with Jesus. "Why are you a Christian? Why are you a Christian?" And a lot of people are unable to say. Some, by tradition. Others cannot say it, because they met Jesus, but they didn't realise it was an encounter with Jesus. Jesus is always looking for us. Always. And we have our restlessness. In the moment in which our restlessness meets Jesus, that is where the life of grace begins, life in its fullness, the life of the Christian journey.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/Homily?



**Head:** What strikes you most about the actions of Jesus on the road to Emmaus.



**Heart:** In asking the question 'What things?' - Jesus seeks to know the heart and experience of Cleopas in the story of his own passion. How do you have honest, personal encounters with the Lord, where you reveal your heart to Him?



**Hands:** Jesus - who had all of the answers, starts the process of encounter on the road to Emmaus by asking all of the questions. How is this a model for us and how might you do the same in witnessing to others?

## PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly **name/describe** their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally **call on the Holy Spirit** to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer **prayers of thanks and praise** to God.
4. **Pray for each others' prayer needs.** Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another **prayer of praise**, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.