

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

St. Luke 24:35-48

“We must have an unconditional readiness to change in order to be transformed in Christ” (Dietrich von Hildebrand). Education in the Faith is not enough. We must know how to live our beliefs. Enthusiasm for virtue is not enough. We must possess virtue, which can only be done when moulded by Christ.

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus undoubtedly knew Our Lord’s teachings and were enthusiastic, but the very fact that they were moving towards Emmaus meant that they were moving away from Jerusalem. And to move from Jerusalem meant to move away from the demands of Our Lord. Because it is the place of His passion and death and resurrection, the place to which He set His face and the city to which He knew had to return. Jerusalem had become the dividing line between stagnation and transformation, between denying Christ and proclaiming Christ, between death and life.

On the other hand, who are we to criticise the disciples? The man they thought would overthrow the Roman occupation and restore to the Jewish people a rightful king, the man who insisted they hold unfailingly to faith in God, who said such faith would be rewarded with life not death, who said that the smallest amount of faith could move a mountain, was dead. He had been arrested, the public was after blood, and so He was tortured to death. Now His body was missing. Some claimed that angels had told them He was alive but they didn’t know anyone who had seen Him.

The disciples, even though they were travelling together, were isolated. Nothing fragments the human person so much as isolation. The deepest longing of the human heart is not intimacy but communion, and ultimately communion with God.

With every meeting we have a choice. We can put our head down when walking down the street or we can smile at the stranger. We can cross over the road to avoid the homeless man or we can give him what he needs. We can blame the waiter for mixing-up our order or we can be patient and accept that we make mistakes ourselves. We can condemn a criminal that we see on the news or we can pray that his pain is ended and his soul is healed.

These, then, are the last days of which St. Luke wrote about in the the Acts of the Apostles, the days when Our Lord has poured out the Holy Spirit, the days when we, now, are the prophets. These casual meetings with one another, these mutual exchanges can all be prophetic and all make the hope of Christ present and transform lives. And when all of this seems too hard, or we find excuses to ignore, to hold a grudge, to be angry, then it's probably for the best that our idea of God is not always God.