

Reflecting
on the Third Sunday of Easter



Archdiocese of
Liverpool

Prepare to be attentive to *The God Who Speaks in this story.*



- Light a candle or tea light if possible.
- Perhaps place daffodils, leaves or a flower from the garden next to the light.

Begin by praying this prayer requested by Archbishop Malcolm:



God Our Father,
each person is precious to You.
You are the Giver of life.
Have mercy on us and protect us at this time,
as the coronavirus threatens health and life.
You are an ever-present Helper in time of trouble.
Watch over those who are suffering,
give strength to those who are aiding the sick
and give courage to all in this time of anxiety.
We ask this of you in the name of your Son.
Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Now, breathe deeply and allow yourself to become still.

Let the music, *If You Believe*, help you to relax.



If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, He sent His only son to live and die, to
live and die.

If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, He died to save us all - for you and me,
for you and me.
If you believe .
If you believe.

If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, He died and rose again to give new life,
to give new life.

If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, His Holy Spirit rests in you and me, in
you and me.

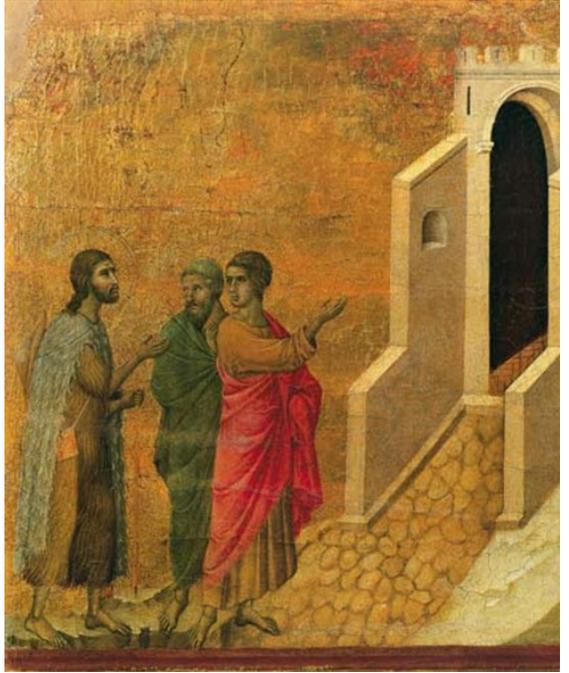
If you believe.
If you believe.
If you believe.

Ask for God's grace and light to fill your heart and your
mind as you open to the Word.



**Spend some time just looking at the three
images.**

- Where is your eye drawn to?
- What feelings are you experiencing?
- What are you noticing?



Pray the Responsorial Psalm *Show us, Lord, the path of life.*



Show us, Lord, the path of life.

Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you.
I say to the Lord: 'You are my God.
O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup;
it is you yourself who are my prize.'

Show us, Lord, the path of life.

I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel,
who even at night directs my heart.
I keep the Lord ever in my sight:
since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm.

Show us, Lord, the path of life.

And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;
even my body shall rest in safety.
For you will not leave my soul among the dead,
nor let your beloved know decay.

Show us, Lord, the path of life.

You will show me the path of life,
the fullness of joy in your presence,
at your right hand happiness for ever.

Show us, Lord, the path of life.

Now, either read slowly to yourself the story below or better still, read it aloud, again slowly.

From the Gospel according to Luke 24:13 – 35



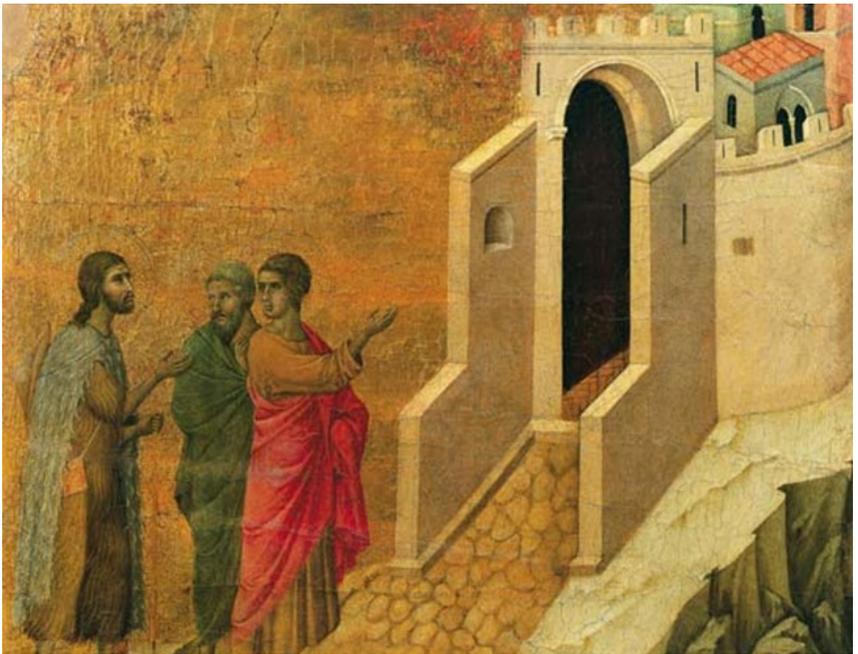
Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing 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. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and 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. Some 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.”

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?"

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!"

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Now revisit the part of the story that seems to be most important for you.

Read this part a second time, aloud if possible, and allow it to nourish you before reading Fr Chris Thomas' reflection...



When I worked as Youth Chaplain in St Helens, I used to take groups of young people away to a place called Kintbury in Berkshire. It was a wonderful place where young people were enabled to share their stories with one another and through acceptance and understanding come to a new and deeper awareness of their own dignity as human beings and of the love of God for them. I watched and listened as through an experience of deep listening and sharing, the young people became aware of the presence of God with them however difficult things might have been. Stories of broken homes that they felt responsible for, of neglect, of abuse, of all sorts of things that made life not worth living, gave way to new hope through love and acceptance. It was a powerful and very real experience.

The two disciples in the Gospel story felt as though life wasn't worth living any more. To be on the road away from Jerusalem is to be going the wrong way. They had watched the one they thought to be the Messiah be broken and die on the cross. All they could see was their misery and their crushed dreams. I often think that the saddest words in the Bible come from Cleopas - 'we had hoped.' We can all be like those two disciples, so self-absorbed that we are unable to see that the risen Lord is there, at our side, particularly at this time when many people are alone and struggling with what the future might be. But then something happens to the two disciples as they begin to share their deep experience with one another. They become aware of an intimate and abiding presence that is with them. Somehow in their relationship with one another, in their deep sharing, they find his risen presence.

The early Church met the risen Jesus in the communities that gathered. Whenever they met together, there was an awareness that he was there. That was their experience. Luke wants us to know that when we meet together and take the risk to be real with one another he is present. When we are prepared to drop our masks and share our real selves with all our brokenness and vulnerability, we will find the risen Christ. We have to be real with one another to discover the presence of Jesus because his presence is a real presence and won't be experienced in a state of illusion. The sad fact is that many of us live at a level of unreality, never really letting others know what is in our hearts and we con ourselves that is what life is about.

For the Church to communicate the presence of Jesus to the world we have to be communities where that deep level of sharing and listening goes on, particularly at this time. That will only happen when people like you and I understand brokenness and pain and hold it lovingly. It will only happen when people are not judged and criticised for what they are but accepted and loved for who they are. It will only happen when we are open and welcoming and don't reject those who seem different because of their race, sexuality, gender or social status.

As they got near to the village the stranger looked as if he was going on, but the disciples asked him to stay for the night. Jesus went in with them, he took bread, and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. It may be some time before we can celebrate Eucharist together again, but we can enter into the reality of one another and discover the presence of God walking with us. When that happens and we can once again gather in our churches, then our celebrations of the Eucharist will become far more real. As we find him in one another so we will find him in the breaking of the bread.



Read through the poem written by Denise Levertov written in response to *The Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus*.

She listens, listens, holding her breath.
Surely that voice
is his—the one
who had looked at her, once,
across the crowd, as no one ever had looked?
Had seen her?
Had spoken as if to her?
Surely those hands were his,
taking the platter of bread from hers just now?
Hands he'd laid on the dying and made them well?
Surely that face—?
The man they'd crucified for sedition and blasphemy.
The man whose body disappeared from its tomb.
The man it was rumoured now some women had seen
this morning,
alive?
Those who had brought this stranger home to their
table
don't recognize yet with whom they sit.
But she in the kitchen,
absently touching the wine jug she's to take in,
a young Black servant intently listening,
swings round and sees
the light around him
and is sure.



As a result of your reflection, offer some prayers of intercession for the people and situations in our world today that seem to you to be most in need. You may like to include one or more of the following:



We pray for Pope Francis ... that he remains safe and well in order to continue his ministry of service to the world at this time.

We pray for all who care for the sick and dying, the elderly and the vulnerable ... may they be encouraged and sustained by your love and the prayer of our communities.

We pray for those who are grieving at this time and for all who suffer from anxiety and depression as a result of our current crisis ... that they may find one who listens deeply to them and offers them the hope of the Resurrection

We pray for ourselves and our loved ones ... in these days when many must experience their daily exercise alone may we all sense the close presence of Jesus who always walks with us.

We pray now in the words Jesus gave us:

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

To end your time of reflection, listen to *In the Breaking of the Bread*.



In the walking on the road, we saw Him.
In the telling of our hopes, we saw Him.
In the burning of our hearts, we saw the Lord.
At the meal He took the bread and then He blessed it,
broke it, offered it.
In the breaking of the bread,
We saw Him!
Suddenly our eyes were opened,
And we knew He was alive!

We set out to find His friends to tell them.
We went to Jerusalem to tell them;
And with joy we told them, "We have seen the Lord!"
And as we were speaking, there He stood among us,
blessed us, said to us,
"Now, my peace I leave with you."
We saw Him!
Suddenly our eyes were opened,
And we knew He was alive!

But then we became afraid without Him.
In the darkened room we stayed without Him,
Waiting for the one He said that He would send.
Then the Spirit of the Lord came down upon us, filling
us, changing us,
Giving us the strength to say:
We saw Him!
Suddenly our eyes were opened,
And we knew He was alive!

We ran out into the street to tell them,
Ev'ryone that we could meet to tell them,
"God has raised him up and we have seen the Lord!"
We took bread as He had done and then we blessed it,
broke it, offered it.
In the breaking of the bread,
We saw Him!
Suddenly our eyes were opened,
There within our midst was Jesus
And we knew He was alive.
In the breaking of the bread,
He is here with us again.
And we know He is alive!

Alleluia!

Acknowledgements

Cover image: The Emmaus Wonderers by Brother Eric de Saussure, The Taizé Picture Bible: Stories from the Scriptures © 1969 Fortress Press.

If You Believe (then God will set you free).
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Images on page 4 (clockwise from left): drawing by Mary Lawler, aged 5, in response to hearing today's gospel story; Emmaus by Duccio di Buoninsegna painted around 1250; The Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus by Diego Velázquez c.1620.

Responsorial Psalm:
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