

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA, MUMBLES
Reflection for
Third Sunday of Eastertide Year A, 26 April 2020
(May be used for Home Prayer Service)
Dominican Friars, Swansea

This reflection may be used during the home prayer service. Please see the home prayer service sheet for details.

A PILGRIM CHURCH STRENGTHENED BY THE EUCHARIST

The journey of the two disciples to Emmaus speaks, in a way, about how the Risen Lord journeys with and strengthens a pilgrim Church that is commissioned to proclaim the Resurrection. Christ is with his Church until the end of time. This message comes alive when we consider some key significations in the narrative.

The two disciples: The pair of disciples signifies the church as a community of disciples. For as Christ says: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). The two disciples were on a journey. This is a pilgrim Church.

On their way to Emmaus: The disciples were on their way to Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. The Passion of Christ took place in Jerusalem; the event of Easter took place there. It is in Jerusalem that the preaching of the Good News must begin. The city signifies the centre of the message of the Christ. But the disciples were moving in a direction away from Jerusalem. Here, we see a church in need of the grace to preach the Gospel. When this grace is received (and faith is strengthened), the disciples will return to Jerusalem to preach the Good News.

Hope lost: The discouraged travellers had hoped that Jesus would be the one to set Israel free from Roman oppression and reign as king in Jerusalem. Their expectations were out of step with God's plan to save humanity from sin and death. The disciples could not stand the scandal of the cross. There is a sense of disappointment and despair, and a lack of faith. Something prevented them from recognising Jesus. As members of the Church community, doubt and despair can prevent us from seeing Jesus in our midst.

Jesus explains the scriptures: Now, this is interesting. Jesus explains the scriptures to them. He begins with the Old Testament and explains to them the passages of scriptures concerning himself. Sacred Scripture is at the centre of our faith. This tells why all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and regulated by Sacred Scripture

(Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, 21). The structure of the Emmaus narrative reflects the structure of the Eucharistic liturgy. What happened could be understood, from a liturgical context, as the liturgy of the Word. Just as the Lord's exposition of scriptures preceded his breaking of the bread at Emmaus, so also the liturgy of the Word precedes the liturgy of Eucharist (breaking of bread) at Mass. This is why "the Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body" (*Dei Verbum*, 21).

And their eyes were opened: After the liturgy of the Word comes the breaking of the bread. Here, the disciples recognised Jesus, although he had been with them all the way. Christ journeys with his Church all the way and all the time. But the real presence of Christ at the Eucharist is the summit of his abiding presence with his Church. For this reason, the Eucharist is the source and summit of our life (Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 11; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1324).

And they set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem: Having encountered Christ at the breaking of bread, the disciples received the grace (and the faith) to proclaim the Good News of the Resurrection. They set out that instant, late that night, and returned to Jerusalem, where they should be announcing the Good News. The Eucharist is the strength of our ministry. It gives life and ardour to the preaching of the Good news. It is from the Eucharist, in which Christ nourishes his Church, that our preaching derives its efficacy. Therefore "the other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1321). We are not only a pilgrim Church; we are a Eucharistic Church.