

# Our Faith on Sunday

## GOSPEL REFLECTION



The two disciples are overcome with awe and delight when they recognize Jesus. Why did it take them so long to recognize him? I think that they, as we ourselves so often, were taken up with events and practicalities; with the dramatic happenings of the previous days. Jesus, walking

beside them, draws their minds back to the Scriptures, to what God has taught their people through their history, of His loving plans for them and especially of His promises. The By knowing the Scriptures, absorbing them, His people were to be ready, prepared and eager to see its fulfilment: to enter into *“the Way”* which is Jesus. Of course, the disciples would not have been disciples at all, if they had not been men and women faithful to their Jewish upbringing, honest and devout.

So Cleopas and his companion (his wife perhaps?) though temporarily distracted, had their hearts in the right place, hearts that *“burned within them”* as Jesus brought their minds back to the deep hope and longing of the *“Chosen People”* and opened their minds to who He was.



EVANGELII GAUDIUM  
(JOY OF THE GOSPEL)



### THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF EVANGELIZATION

#### THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN THE PART

234. An innate tension also exists between globalization and localization. We need to pay attention to the global so as to avoid narrowness and banality. Yet we also need to look to the local, which keeps our feet on the ground. Together, the two prevent us from falling into one of two extremes. In the first, people get caught up in an abstract, globalized universe ... At the other extreme, they turn into a museum of local folklore, a world apart, doomed to doing the same things over and over, and incapable of being challenged by novelty or appreciating the beauty which God bestows beyond their borders.

### The Sacrament of the Present Moment\*

#### SAYING OUR YES

Saying ‘Yes’ to God demands both activity and passivity - doing and accepting.

We must do all God asks.

We must accept all God sends.

Doing what we must do is to act with simplicity and safety. We can then go ahead without undue concern about theology or high-flown thinking. God teaches us on a deeper level than that.

However, remaining in the present moment takes great courage. To sing the song of abandonment, no matter what storms are raging around us, makes us like Jesus.

Jesus walked the way of his passion and cross in loving obedience to the Father, even though it meant being treated in a way that was totally opposed to his human dignity.

Jesus marched on undaunted, and so should we. God alone matters and doing God’s will is how we show that God matters most.

\*Jean Pierre de Caussade’s Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence for everyone by Elizabeth Ruth Obbard and published by New City ISBN: 978-1-905039-11-1



## PARISH LETTER – 26<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2020

It is now just over a month since the Bishops of England and Wales advised that all public celebrations of Mass were to be suspended – which was followed, a few days later, by the Prime Minister's request that all places of worship should be closed even for private prayers and devotions. Although we were anticipating that we would have to adapt our celebration of Mass ( and had already begun to do so ) in response to the unprecedented threat to public health posed by the coronavirus, I think that none of us imagined that the pandemic would have such serious consequences for our whole way of life and especially its effects on the life and worship of the Church.

It is important to take note that as a Church, and as the Body of Christ, we have willingly consented to agree to these restrictions on our worship for the sake of the common good. There are, of course, other circumstances in which it would be right for us to resolutely oppose any attempt by the state to restrict our religious freedoms and liberty of conscience - and those days may yet come upon us – but in the circumstances of today we agree to share in the deprivations and restrictions of our fellow citizens in the hope that our sacrifices and abstinences ( in this extended Lent and Good Friday ) will bring us through to happier days.

However, it seems possible that ( long after other sections of society experience an easing of restrictions ) places of worship, along with sports and entertainment venues may continue to be kept in lockdown because of the near impossibility of observing appropriate social distancing in these situations. It may therefore be several more months, and possibly longer, before we will be able to meet together again in celebrating Holy Mass, but hopefully, before that time, churches may at least be allowed to re-open for private prayers and devotions.

In the meantime, and from a practical and pastoral point of view, Fr. Neil – following guidelines - is restricting his pastoral visits to visiting ( by agreement ) those who are terminally, or seriously, ill and other exceptional cases. However – upon request and observing the social distancing rules, and at your own chosen risk, Fr. Neil will respond positively to any request for a meeting or pastoral visit should you desire it.

Mass continues to be celebrated, as does the daily rhythm of the prayer life of the Church. We continue to be united with each other through our communion with the Risen Jesus. He lives in each one of us by faith and the nearer we are to Him, the nearer we are to each other. How important therefore to maintain this precious communion with Christ through daily prayer and through spiritual reading – and especially the reading of Scripture. Many of you will also have access via the internet to daily Mass, the Rosary and other devotions of the Church – but our true and real communion with one another is through our spiritual communion with the Risen Jesus, which means that distance does not separate us from each other! We are one in Christ! Let us rejoice in that precious gift! Let us pray for each other and pray that we may come through this lockdown spiritually strengthened, with a new and deeper commitment to our faith, and a renewed sense of thanksgiving to God for all those things that, perhaps, in the past we have taken too much for granted. May God bless us and keep us safe and bring us to that wonderful opening Mass of Thanksgiving and Celebration when the doors of the church are open once more “for the praise and the glory of His name, for our good and the good of His Holy Church”.

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**Benetia Whittington (RIP)** Please remember the family and Benetia in your prayers. Benetia's Funeral Service takes place this Tuesday (28<sup>th</sup>) at Margam Crematorium.

**Gary Derrick (RIP)** Please remember the family and Gary in your prayers. Gary's Funeral Service takes place on Wednesday 6 May at Margam Crematorium.

**Matilda Jones (RIP)** Please remember Jean and Sid and Jean's mother, Matilda, in your prayers.

*Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.*

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### The Third Sunday of Easter – 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020 – The Gospel of Luke Chapter 24 v 13 – 35

On this third Sunday of Easter, during these wonderful forty days leading to the Ascension of Jesus into Heaven and the coming down of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, our Gospel today records for us the account of Jesus' resurrection appearance to the two disciples on their journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the evening of that first Easter day. As Jesus walks by their side, He expounds to them "**starting with Moses and going through all the prophets**" how all the scriptures point to Him and find their fulfilment in Him, for "**was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into His Glory?**"

Here is the mystery of God's pre-ordination. We do not know to which Old Testament scriptures Jesus referred when, throughout forty days of further resurrection appearances, He continued to teach the disciples all those things concerning Himself and the Kingdom of God ( Acts 1 v 3 ) but scripture suggests, His descent from Abraham ( Gen. 12 v 3; Mtt 1 v 1 ), His descent from David ( Jer. 23 v 5, Is. 9 v 7; Lk. 1 v 32 ), His Birth in Bethlehem ( Micah 5 v 2,4; Lk 2 v 11 ), His Virgin Birth ( Is. 7 v 14; Lk 2 v 11), and that in His Suffering and Death He should be betrayed ( Ps. 41 v 9; Jn 13 v 18 ), for forty pieces of silver ( Zech. 11 v 12; Mtt. 26 v 15/16), scourged ( Is. 50 v 6; Mtt. 26 v 30,67 ), crucified ( Zech. 12 v 10; Ps. 22 v 16; Jn 20 v 25f ), with the wicked ( Is. 53 v 9,12; Mk. 15 v 27 ), lots cast for His clothing (Ps. 22 v 18; Jn. 19 v 23 ), His Bones unbroken ( Ex. 12 v 46; Jn. 19 v 33 ), buried with the rich ( Is. 53 v 9; Mtt. 27 v 57f ), that He shall rise from the dead ( Ps. 16 v 10; Lk. 24 v 6 ) and be taken up into heaven ( Ps. 24 v 7f; Jn. 6 v 62; Acts 1 v 9f ) – and yet, in the providence of God, all these things "freely" happened both through the perfectly surrendered will of Jesus but also through the disobedience and rebellion of our fallen nature – as described in our first reading today ( Acts 2 v 23 – "this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified by the hands of lawless men" ).

It is clear from Scripture and the constant teaching of the Church, that the pre-ordained events in the Life of Jesus ( brought about through our own acts both of obedience and disobedience ) have not yet, thus far, been exhausted. Even as His pre-ordained Birth, Death and Resurrection were brought about in and through the will of others, so also His pre-ordained Return, His Second Coming, is pre-ordained through the events of history, and through the behaviours of others today and in the days to come. The Ascension of Jesus which we shall celebrate on Ascension Thursday (21st May ) powerfully reminds us of the pre-ordination of the Return of Jesus – "*men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven*" ( Acts 1 v 11 ).

As, in our readings today, we recall that the Life of Jesus fulfils both the Law and the Prophets ( Luke 24 v 27 ) and the pre-ordained plan of God ( Acts 2 v 23 ), we are reminded that there are in Scripture more prophecies and promises relating to His Second Coming than to His First Coming and we are encouraged, in Scripture, to interpret the signs of the times ( Mtt. 16 v 3 ) so that "**when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near**" ( Luke 21 v 28 ).

In that same sermon of St. Peter, on the Day of Pentecost ( our first reading today ) he quotes from the prophet Joel, "*In the Last Days it shall be, says the Lord, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh – and I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth beneath – before the Day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day*" ( Acts 2 v 17 – 21 ).

We continue to pray – as we have been praying – that through this long "Good Friday" of the Church ( the suspension of the public celebration of Mass and the dislocation of the Church – the result of our human behaviours ) the Lord will bring us ( through divine pre-ordination and a deeper and hidden providence ) to Resurrection and a New Pentecost in the life of the Church. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! ( Revelation 22 v 20 ).

"Holy Spirit, Lord of light, From the clear celestial height, Thy pure beaming radiance give; Come Thou Father of the poor, Come with treasures that endure, Come Thou Light of all that live! Heal our wounds, our strength renew, On our dryness pour Thy dew, Wash the stains of guilt away, Bend the stubborn heart and will, Melt the frozen, warm the chill, Guide the steps that go astray. Thou, on those who evermore, Thee confess and Thee adore, In Thy sevenfold gifts descend. Give them comfort when they die, Give them life with Thee on high, Give them joys that never end". Amen! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

**Cry out with joy to God, all the earth;  
O sing to the glory of his name.  
O render him glorious praise, alleluia.**

Cf. Ps 65:1-2

**THE COLLECT**

May your people exult for ever, O God,  
in renewed youthfulness of spirit,  
so that, rejoicing now in the restored glory of our adoption,  
we may look forward in confident hope  
to the rejoicing of the day of resurrection.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

**FIRST READING**

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles 2:14. 22-33

On the day of Pentecost Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd in a loud voice: 'Men of Israel, listen to what I am going to say: Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God by the miracles and portents and signs that God worked through him when he was among you, as you all know. This man, who was put into your power by the deliberate intention and foreknowledge of God, you took and had crucified by men outside the Law. You killed him, but God raised him to life, freeing him from the pangs of Hades; for it was impossible for him to be held in its power since, as David says of him:

I saw the Lord before me always,  
for with him at my right hand nothing can shake me.  
So my heart was glad  
and my tongue cried out with joy:  
my body, too, will rest in the hope  
that you will not abandon my soul to Hades  
nor allow your holy one to experience corruption.  
You have made known the way of life to me,  
you will fill me with gladness through your presence.'

'Brothers, no one can deny that the patriarch David himself is dead and buried: his tomb is still with us. But since he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn him an oath to make one of his descendants succeed him on the throne, what he foresaw and spoke about was the resurrection of the Christ; he is the one who was not abandoned to Hades, and whose body did not experience corruption. God raised this man Jesus to life, and all of us are witnesses to that. Now raised to the heights by God's right hand, he has received from the Father the Holy Spirit, who was promised, and what you see and hear is the outpouring of that Spirit.'

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.****PSALM**

Ps 15:1-2.5.7-11. R.v11

**R) 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.' **(R)**

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. **(R)**

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. **(R)**

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

**SECOND READING**

A reading from the first letter of St Peter 1:17-21

If you are acknowledging as your Father one who has no favourites and judges everyone according to what he has done, you must be scrupulously careful as long as you are living away from your home. Remember, the ransom that was paid to free you from the useless way of life your ancestors handed down was not paid in anything corruptible, neither in silver nor gold, but in the precious blood of a lamb without spot or stain, namely Christ; who, though known since before the world was made, has been revealed only in our time, the end of the ages, for your sake.

Through him you now have faith in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory for that very reason – so that you would have faith and hope in God.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.****GOSPEL ACCLAMATION****Alleluia, alleluia!**

Cf. Lk 24:32

**Lord Jesus, explain the scriptures to us.  
Make our hearts burn within us as you talk to us.  
Alleluia!**

**GOSPEL**

Luke 24:13-35

The Lord be with you.

**And with your spirit.**

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

Two of the disciples of Jesus were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. He said to them, 'What matters are you discussing as you walk along?' They stopped short, their faces downcast.

Then one of them, called Cleopas answered him, 'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days.' 'What things?' he asked. 'All about Jesus of Nazareth' they answered 'who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us; they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they did not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing.'

Then he said to them, 'You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?' Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself.

When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. 'It is nearly evening' they said 'and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at the table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained 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 the bread.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.****PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Receive, O Lord, we pray,  
these offerings of your exultant Church,  
and, as you have given her cause for such great gladness,  
grant also that the gifts we bring  
may bear fruit in perpetual happiness.  
Through Christ our Lord.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

Lk 24: 35

**The disciples recognized the Lord Jesus  
in the breaking of the bread, alleluia.**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Look with kindness upon your people, O Lord,  
and grant, we pray,  
that those you were pleased to renew by eternal mysteries  
may attain in their flesh  
the incorruptible glory of the resurrection.  
Through Christ our Lord.