

Sermon for 3rd Sunday of Easter – 26th April 2020 – Year A – Acts 2:14a, 36 – 41 and Luke 24:13 – 35

**Let the word of my mouth and the meditations of my heart
be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)**

*“Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road,
while he was opening the scriptures to us?”*

Has your heart been burning lately, when you read the Bible? Has there been a passage or a word that made you feel something? Comfort? Peace? Loved? Cared for?

Perhaps you have same experience than me. When I read the Bible, something speaks to me but after a while, all I can remember is how I felt. Sometimes I can remember the exact word or passage and go back to it, but more often, it is the feeling I had in that particular time of need, and knowing that I was fed through the Word of God. How in that moment of my journey God was with me and helped me to know His love and care for me.

To have these experiences is more important right now than perhaps ever in our lives. We are locked in. We have limited access to our “normal” lives. Some of us are facing completely new kind of work load or environment as keyworkers. But emotions are same for all of us: We are anxious, nervous and fearful, sad, depressed, lonely, bored... I’m running out of words here, but you know what I mean.

In our reading from Luke’s Gospel, we have two of Jesus’ disciples, Cleopas and most likely his wife Mary, walking to Emmaus, late afternoon that same day when Jesus had raised from death. They encounter a stranger, who walks with them and asks what they are talking about. After telling this stranger what had happened. This stranger starts teaching them everything from the Scriptures, from the start to “finish”. When they come to Emmaus, this same stranger hosts them at the table doing something which finally opens their eyes to realise that it was Jesus himself who had walked with them.

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We are in very odd situation as Christians now that we cannot gather on Sundays in our church. We are dripped off our tradition of gathering in where we hear the word and share the bread. Something that happened in our Gospel passage too. But this is also an opportunity to each of us to move beyond our known tradition and into an experience of personal recognition – just like those two disciples. We have an opportunity to study the Bible, the Word of God, the story of God's people so that it finally brings together our heads and hearts and sets our hearts on fire.

I feel that we are invited to listen to the Bible perhaps in the way we never done before. You may wonder how we can do?

We are actually very lucky because we have an old Church tradition to go to; *Lectio Divina*, divine reading. It is something each one of us can do, even children. Lectio Divina has been around since 300 AD and it has four simple steps that are easy to follow:

1. Reading

Read the Bible passage slowly and attentively 3 times.

2. Reflection

Then reflect on any words or phrases you notice. Think about how they may apply to your life. Playfully explore what words, phrases and ideas excites you or stir up something in you.

3. Prayer

Respond to the passage through prayer, as having a conversation with God about those things you reflected in the step 2.

4. Contemplation

This final step is to rest in God's presence as you have engaged with God's Word prayerfully and reflectively.

You can find about this way of prayer on our church website. Just go to 'Virtual Church' page and scroll down until you find Lectio Divina section.

I know to some this way of prayer may feel alien, but then again unless we try, we don't know if it helps us to connect with the Word of God more deeply. So have a go and get in touch if you have any questions or observations, good or bad.

I wrote in the notice sheet last week that perhaps this Eastertide could be our Emmaus Road journey when we encounter Christ Jesus afresh through our prayer life, reading of the Bible more deeply, and rediscover who each one of us is called to be as a member of the Body of Christ in the world today and the time to come.

During these hard days of sheltering in our homes, hearing terrible stories of death and suffering, and fearing for our futures as individuals, families, and communities, we have to trust in God. Firstly, God is with us. Let's not forget that He is present in the rhythms and rituals of our ordinary days. But he is also present in our engagement with the Scriptures. Wherever and whenever we make room, God is with us.

The road to Emmaus is the beginning of the new chapter in God's story with His people – that's us. Jesus led God's people – that includes us, out of slavery of sin and death, and invites all of us to engage with Him and God through the Scriptures until we are able to come together and break the bread too.

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Amen.