

EASTER 3
Acts 2:14-22-33
1Peter 1:17-21
Lk 24:13-35

The message of the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles is that, 'The Christian Faith stands or falls on the truth of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.' In his Pentecost Day speech, St Peter refers to the pre-crucifixion ministry of Jesus when people were healed, forgiven, taught and miracles performed. Jesus was executed by the secular authorities at the behest of the religious authorities and in response God performed another mighty act by raising Jesus from the dead. The Epistle of St Peter describes Jesus as the unblemished Passover Lamb that was sacrificed and set upon a throne as ruler of the universe. Jesus' offering of himself as the Lamb of God is the act that draws people to God *if* they recognise it as an act of God's love for them.

The disciples believed that God's people would be raised from the dead at the end of all things when God's Messiah announced that the Kingdom was fulfilled. However, the disciples began to realise that if Jesus had been raised from the dead, he must be the Messiah, and God's Kingdom was already here. However, they had to be certain that the one they recognised was the same person that had been crucified a few days earlier.

The first Christians came to recognise that Jesus' resurrection encompassed Jesus' victory over death, his removal from the world of time and space back to God and his new role as Lord of the Universe. St Luke records these understandings in different events that occurred after the Resurrection, and Jesus' appearance of the Road to Emmaus is one of them and clarifies the nature of the Mass.

In his gospel and in the Acts of the Apostles, St Luke records Jesus eating meals with sinners, Pharisees and his disciples. Three of these refer to the 'breaking of the bread' (Lk 9:11-17; 22:19-20; 24:30). On Easter evening Jesus joined two very confused and disappointed disciples as they walked to Emmaus. These disciples were trying to make sense of the events that had just occurred in Jerusalem when Jesus, whom they did not recognise, joined them and rebuked them for not understanding the writings of Moses and the Prophets. Had they not read Isaiah 53?

Jesus was invited to join them for a meal and during the meal he did something that was familiar to them. He took the bread, said the blessing, broke it and shared it with them. In this action Jesus was recognised and the lives of the disciples was changed. They now knew why the tomb was empty when the women went there that morning. They themselves had walked and talked with the risen Jesus and for a brief moment they recognised him before he was seen no longer. No wonder these men of faith could do nothing other than return to Jerusalem under the bright light of the Passover moon to share their news with the others.

The faith of these two disciples had come to them in two stages. Firstly, through understanding the Scriptures and then through a vision of the risen Christ. All of us are able

to read the Scriptures. Not many receive a vision of the risen Christ, but we can all recognise his presence in our lives.

In recording this event St Luke intends it to be a bridge between the earthly meals that Jesus ate and the Mass that emerged in the worship of the Church. Jesus has died. He was raised from the dead and now lives. The one place where he is recognised is when the priest of the people of God meet together to take bread, give thanks, break it and share it in memory of Jesus. This is done to re-present the offering of Jesus the Lamb of God and for us to receive the benefits he won for us through that offering. But also we do so in anticipation of sharing in the Heavenly Banquet with our fellow faithful in the presence of the Risen Christ himself. Like the disciples in Emmaus, our hearts should burn with joy as we reflect upon these things.

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