

Gospel Events

The Baptism of Jesus

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the desert,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.' "

John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt round his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the Jordan River.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptising, he said to them: "You brood of

vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?"

Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness." Then John consented.

As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased".



Meditation:

The woman with the little boy saw him first – just another man, coming to join all the others waiting: sitting on the bank, waiting. Some were chatting, quietly, others were silent: thinking, praying.

A group stood tall, black, aloof in the sunshine, watching, listening for a word out of line from the Baptist in the water.

The wind blew the sand in gritty streams among the grass as the man drew nearer.

The Baptist called and another one pushed up from the bank and went down into the water to have his sins washed away. He spoke quietly to the Baptist and then went under. His family watched proudly and the sun glistened on the ripples as he disappeared. He came up, pleased, trying not to splutter as he splashed back wetly to the bank.

The woman looked back again to the stranger coming, while her child ran the sand through his fingers

Just another man? There was something about him – different and not different; ordinary yet special.

As he greeted him, the Baptist waved and smiled, but his expression changed as the man went into the water. “No, no, Jesus,” she heard him say, “you should baptise me!”

“Please,” the other said, “go on!”

By now everyone had noticed and the bank was silent except for the whisper of the sand in the grass.

The man called Jesus went under, held by the Baptist. Just ripples left. Gone. No more. Then he rose up, out of the water, standing tall again.

And a clap of thunder rolled like a huge voice speaking. She looked quickly at her lad playing quietly with the sand and dreamed the sky spoke of being so pleased with a beloved son.

Looking back she watched the man called Jesus walk off into the desert. What was he thinking?

Thoughts:

How far do you go into the desert with Jesus? What are you looking for?

If you were a hermit, living in the desert, how would you fill your day? (be specific – don't go for a vague idea such as 'pray'.) How much of that could be transplanted to your own modern lifestyle? Will you try it?

Why do you think Jesus got Baptised?

What does the desert represent – in Jesus' life? – in our lives?

Prayer:

Lord, how hard is a new beginning!

New life, new ways!

Can I just leave my old life behind?

Can I start anew?

Can I bear to face the desert?

You did.

I'm so comfortable, Lord, and the desert is right out of my comfort zone.

I can't do it alone:

I don't know where to go

I don't know how to get there

I don't know what to do.

Show me, Lord. Please lead the way!

-push me from behind,

- hold my hand,

Anything!

I can't bear it alone,

deserted.

Jesus Changes Water to Wine

Jesus Changes Water to Wine

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. (*John 2:1-11*)



Meditation:

This story can be read on two levels: on the one hand, it's a good story about Jesus and tells us a lot about him. On the other hand, John, as the actual writer of the Gospel, uses the story to make wider and deeper points.

For example: - John shows Jesus calling Mary "Woman" twice. Once at the very beginning of his public ministry, in Cana and once at the very end, at the crucifixion. Both times it's as if John wants to highlight the wider significance of Mary. The first time it's almost as if Mary, having followed God's plan exactly, speaks as the new Eve to the new Adam asking a favour and the reply is an abundance of wine for celebration - and the reply is also from God. The second time that John uses "Woman" for Mary is at the foot of the cross when he gives Mary to John as his mother – and symbolically to us as well. We can therefore ask Mary for what we need, as our Mother, and she will pass it on to Christ as his mother. As at Cana, he will give us what we need.

On the simple level, however, it allows us to get to know Jesus better as a person and is therefore very important. Jesus enjoys a good celebration: he doesn't want it to fall flat and be spoiled. He's quite happy to help everything go with a swing! He and his mother have been invited to the wedding, probably as friends, maybe as relatives, but at the very least as members of the local community. We know from other places in the Gospels that he makes friends easily, but here he is shown as part of his wider community. By his actions, he obviously approves of Marriage and wants to celebrate it properly with the couple and their families. A wedding, then, would have taken place over several days and a good supply of wine was essential for a proper celebration. No wine would have been

an absolute disaster. Not only does he listen to his Mum when she asks a favour, but he does what she asks immediately – as she knows he will!

What does it mean for us, since we, too, want to be included in Jesus' circle of friends? Do we really include him up front in our celebrations? Do we also include him in our relationships – particularly in our family? This story suggests that marriage is something special, and celebrating it with God brings it to the status of a sacrament. We can turn to him when times are rough and celebrate with him when times are good.

This story brings it home to us that Jesus was so human, so ordinary that you could meet him anywhere. Next time you go out, look for him!

Thoughts:

- Imagine you did meet Jesus down in the local café/Pub. What would you talk about? What would you laugh about? Would you ask him for the latest Jewish Joke? Would you buy him a drink?
- Do you involve Jesus in your joys as well as your problems and sorrows? If you do, how do you do it? If you don't, why not? Will you now?
- Mary picked up on the need, and responded. Do we involve Mary when we are in need?
- Do we pick up and respond to needs in our families or communities? Do you take action – or just throw money at it? (Good though giving alms is!) Could you do more? How?

Prayer:

O God, I am glad you have not made us to walk alone. From the dawn of time you have known our need of others:

You gave Adam a wife;

You gave David his friend Jonathan:

You gave Naomi the comfort of Ruth in old age;

You gave to Zechariah and Elizabeth the babe John, born to bless their home and be the forerunner of Christ.

And all through the centuries you have blessed us with these wonderful human relationships.

Bless my friendships, I pray;

Bless my loves - ;

Bless my special relationships. *(Pause for thought)*

There is no good and lovely thing but comes from you. As we plan and live close to each other, make good our relationships and keep our personalities open to all that is strong, beautiful and worthy of the trust you have placed in us. Help us to enjoy life and rejoice in each other, and to you be all praise and glory, now and forever. Amen.

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

The apostles gathered round Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognised them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

But he answered, "You give them something to eat."

They said to him, "That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

"How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see."

When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish."

Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand. *(Mark 6:30-44)*

Meditation:

The school I used to teach at was a city school with all the problems you often get with city schools. While most of the children and their parents were delightful, there was a sizable minority who obviously struggled in some way and so, when we could, we introduced a Breakfast Club. This was funded partly by a small charge and partly (at least at first) by a small fund from the government. It was not much – a dollop of beans and a couple of sausages with a slice of bread, or a bowl of cereal with milk. It was quite popular. It didn't solve all our problems – some children couldn't get to it, or couldn't pay - but we did notice not only an improvement in children's learning, but also an improvement in general behaviour round the school. When people are hungry, it's difficult for them to concentrate properly.

I wonder if Jesus knew this. He had been teaching all day and the people were hungry and tired. If he sent them away they would have forgotten what he had said. Instead, he sat them down and fed them. If he wanted them to remember the things he had just



been saying, what better way could he have found? Imagine it! You sit down in groups on the grass and although people naturally go with people they know, among five thousand there have to be people you don't know, or only know slightly. So you talk about this Jesus and what he's just said and done. How he healed so many people, how he talks about God as if he knows Him and how there will be food now. You talk about how he spoke of loving God and our neighbour and maybe someone in the group has brought some food, which, because of Jesus, they share.

Two thousand years later we like to concentrate on the miracle of sharing five loaves and two fish among five thousand. We concentrate on Christ's pity and compassion, we analyse how he talked about 'Manna from Heaven' alluding to the Jews time in the desert and we like to compare this miracle with Christ giving himself to us as bread in the daily miracle of Mass, but perhaps we miss the real lesson of this miracle which is a very simple one: – just listen to Jesus!

Thoughts:

Imagine being in the group on the grass. How do you react to the things Jesus says? Do you agree with the man who says that it's all very well saying love God and love your neighbour, but when it comes down to it, if you have to make a choice you have to choose the law rather than your neighbour because the law is about God and your neighbour is just human?

Think:

What do you understand by 'listen'? *How do you listen?* What do you hear? When do you hear it?

Prayer:

Give me today, O God, a mind which can really learn.

Give me

The attentive mind, that I may concentrate all the time on what I am hearing or doing;

The retentive mind, that I may not hear and forget, but that I may grasp a thing and remember it;

The open mind, that no prejudice may blind me to truth I do not wish to see;

The eager mind, that I may not be content to remain *as I am*, but that every day I may try to add something new to my store of knowledge and of skill, and something finer to my store of goodness;

The listening mind, so that when I hear your words, I think about them and use them to grow ever closer to you.

This I ask for Jesus' sake, Amen.

The Proclamation of the Kingdom

Gospel Mark 1:14-20 - *Repent, and believe the Good News*

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. "The time has come" he said "and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News."

As he was walking along by the Sea of Galilee he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net in the lake—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you into fishers of men." And at once they left their nets and followed him.

Going on a little further, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they too were in their boat, mending their nets. He called them at once and, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the men he employed, they went after him.



Meditation:

The day was hot and sunny and the lawn was soft – mossy, with daisies and dandelions – and further up, a cowslip. A soft breeze and the faint growl of distant traffic added to the quiet. A dandelion nods next to the book; small, yellow, exquisite. My dandelion!

The book was good. 'The Cosmos.' Big pictures, bright colours. Wow! Mind-blowing distances – the Andromeda Galaxy – beautiful – but how far away! Two million light years – that's two million lots of six trillion miles. Imagine! I can't, but the picture's beautiful; and God made it. Did He make it for me? If me and the dandelion were alone on the Earth, would it still be there? Can we be that special? It's all God's work, God's Kingdom.

What a king!

The others come to share my dandelion, but not my book. They sit and talk of friends, of what they'll do and people they know. The talk is quick and noisy. I have things to do, places to go. I should be busy: - I am called – but I can't forget the book, the pictures, the vast spaces. The others chat and the dandelion nods, close, bright, beautiful, small. We're all a part of God's mighty Kingdom. It's so vast - and yet so close.

Thoughts:

- When Jesus called, the four fishermen came. They, like us, knew Jesus, but it was still a step into the unknown. We are called. How do we respond?
- What do you think of when you say "Thy Kingdom come"?

Prayers:

Even in the bustle of my everyday work
It is possible to retreat for a brief instant
To the peace that I have known and that still exists.

Lord, you call us all:
you have given us the gift of vision;
The ability to look beyond the difficulties that surround us.
Help me to use that vision
To be able to stand back from immediate problems
To see them against the immensity of time.
For against a vision like that my problems begin to look small.

Lord of life
Help me to recognise the moments that are given to me each day,
Moments of stillness that can bring me into your presence,
Moments that glimpse eternity through the flickering seconds.
Let me turn back to you and find you again.
Let me see the peace that exists in the eye of the storm.
Peace in the midst of activity.

Let me have that vision
In which questions and problems
Are lost in the vastness
Of the endless love
That surrounds me

Amen

God created me to do him some definite service;
he has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another.

I have my mission -
I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next...
Therefore, I will trust him...

If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve him;
in perplexity, my perplexity may serve him;
if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve him...
He does nothing in vain;
he may prolong my life, he may shorten it,
he knows what he is about.

John Henry Cardinal Newman

The Transfiguration

The Transfiguration

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!' When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen. *(Luke 9:28-36)*



Meditation:

Jesus goes up a high mountain. Luke adds that he goes there to pray (Lk 9:28). There, on the summit of the mountain, Jesus appears in glory in the presence of Peter, James and John. Together with him appear Moses and Elijah. The high mountain recalls Mount Sinai, where in times past, God had made known his will to the people by presenting the law to Moses. The white clothes of Jesus recall Moses shrouded in light as he speaks to God on the Mountain and as he receives the law from God (cf. Ex 34:29-35). Elijah and Moses, the two great authorities of the Old Testament, speak with Jesus. Moses represents the Law and Elijah the prophets. Luke says that they talked about the Death of Jesus in Jerusalem (Lk 9:31). Thus it was clear that the Old Testament, both the Law and the Prophets, taught that the way to glory is through the cross (Cf Is 53).

In Mark's Gospel, the scene of the transfiguration is linked to the question of the return of the prophet Elijah (Mk 9:9-13). In those days, people expected the return of the prophet Elijah and were not aware that Elijah had already returned in the person of John the Baptist (Mk 9:13). The same thing happens today. Many people live in expectation of the return of Jesus and even write on the walls of cities: Jesus will return! They are not aware that Jesus is already present in our lives. Every now and then, like an unexpected flash of lightning, this presence of Jesus breaks out and shines, transforming our lives. A

question that each one of us should ask is: Has my faith in Jesus offered me a moment of transfiguration and intense joy? How have such moments of joy given me strength in moments of difficulties?

Thoughts:

- How would you speak with the transfigured Jesus? – In Latin? Using “thee” or “thou”? Why/why not?
- The Disciples came to the realisation of Jesus as God and Jesus as Man slowly. They knew him as Man first. We are aware of Jesus as God and as man from the first and normally we know him as God first. How do you deal with the dual nature of Christ?
- In the Eastern tradition they emphasise Christ as King and God, while acknowledging his humanity. In our Western tradition we tend to look for his humanity, while also acknowledging him as God and King. Is our balance right? Why/why not?

Prayer:

Almighty and merciful God,
you break the power of evil and make all things new
in your Son Jesus Christ, the King of the universe.
May all in heaven and earth
acclaim your glory
and never cease to praise you.

The Institution of the Eucharist

During the meal Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. "Take this and eat it," he said. "This is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them. "All of you must drink from it," he said, "for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink this fruit of the vine from now until the day when I drink it new with you in my Father's reign." Then, after singing songs of praise, they walked out to the Mount of Olives.

(Matthew 26:26-30)



A final mystery of light is the institution of the Eucharist, in which Christ offers his body and blood as food under the signs of bread and wine, and testifies 'to the end' his love for humanity (Jn 13:1), for whose salvation he will offer himself in sacrifice. (*RVM*, 21)

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.

"This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. "I tell you the truth; I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God."

When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Meditation:

The Institution of the Eucharist takes place at the Last Supper, where Jesus shares his very self with his disciples in the form of bread and wine. It is truly an expression of God's —saving presence—God's Kingdom of love—among us in the form of a banquet. We are round the table with Christ in the centre. This holy meal unites us in love with God and with one another so that we become the one body of Christ. In the Eucharist, our personal prayer merges with that of Christ and with the public prayer of the whole assembly.

This mystery of the Eucharist is truly illuminating in that it reveals God's amazing care for us. The God revealed here is a loving servant ready to hand over his entire self to nourish, forgive, unite and heal us. He leaves his disciples with a memorial, a sacrament of love, by which his saving presence stays with us in a wonderful way until the end of time.

In the Eucharist, writes the pope, Christ "testifies 'to the end' his love for humanity (John 13:1), for whose salvation he will offer himself in sacrifice." In this mystery, we reflect on

Christ's amazing gift of himself to us. Jesus' essential gesture at the Eucharist is his handing over his body to the community gathered around him.

Thoughts:

How do you respond and what do you say to someone who has given themselves completely to you? Do you hold back?

God gives Himself to us unconditionally.

Would you ever give / have you ever given, yourself unconditionally to anyone?

What does that mean in practice?

How does Jesus dying on the cross show us God's unconditional love?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for the gift of yourself in the Eucharist. Help me to appreciate your incredible gift and through it grow ever closer to you. Lord it is difficult for me to overcome the everyday appearance of the bread and the wine and realise that they just hide the reality of you as body and blood. In this scientific age, not seeing is not believing – help me to believe and see. Through you as Lord and God, world without end, Amen.

May Jesus in the Eucharist always be the very centre and heart of our church, the centre and heart of our faith, the centre and heart of our parish, and the centre and heart of the lives of each of us.

O Sacrament most holy,
O Sacrament divine,
All praise and all thanksgiving
Be every moment thine.

On the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24: vv13 – 34)

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognising him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" he asked.

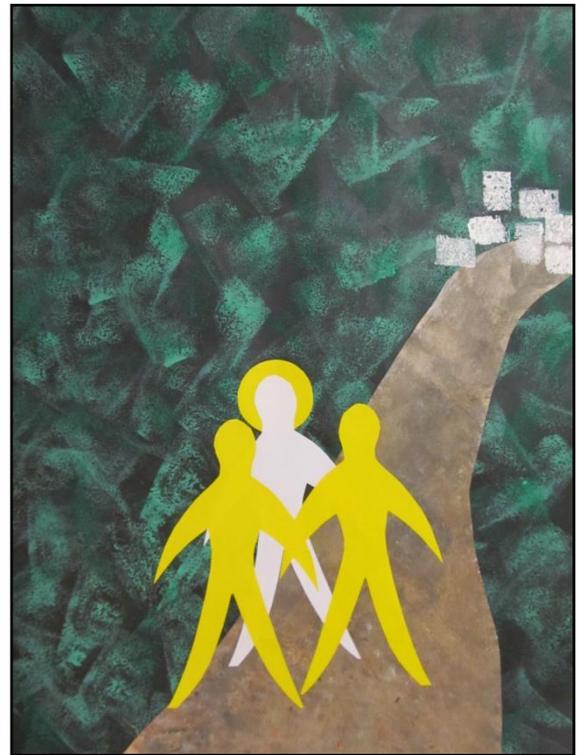
"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. What is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us: They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going further. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread.



Reflection:

Jesus meets the two friends in a situation of fear and of lack of faith. The force of death, the cross, had killed in them their hope. This was the situation of many people at the time, and also today. Jesus gets close to them and walks by their side; he listens to their conversation and asks: "What are all these things that you are discussing as you walk along?" Their reply was: "Our hope had been that he would be the one to set us free". How, today, could you talk with people who suffer? Jesus gets close, listens to their reality, feels their problems and asks questions which give them a different vision.

He uses the scriptures and goes back to enlighten the problem which makes the two friends suffer, and to clarify the situation which they are living. He also uses it to place them in the whole project of God which came from Moses and the prophets. Thus, he indicates that history had not escaped from God's hand. Jesus uses the Bible not as a doctor who knows everything, but rather like a companion who comes to help the friends and to remind them what they had forgotten. Jesus tries to awaken their memory: "Foolish and slow to believe all that the prophets have said! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into his glory?" What prevented them from walking, now becomes for them force and light on the journey. How can we do this today?

The Bible, in itself, does not open their eyes, it only makes their hearts burn. What opens their eyes and makes them see, is the breaking of the bread, the community gesture of sharing, and the celebration of the Supper. They recognise Jesus in the breaking of bread. Jesus does not take possession of his friends' road. Risen, the disciples are capable of walking alone.

The two disciples, courageously, enthusiastically, get back on the road to go to Jerusalem, where the same forces of death, which had killed Jesus and had killed their hope, continue to be active. But, now everything has changed. If Jesus is alive, then there is in him and with him a stronger power than that which killed him. This experience makes them resurrect! Truly, everything has changed. There is the return and not the flight! Faith and not unbelief! Hope and not despair! Critical conscience and not fatalism in the face of power! Liberty and not oppression! In one word: life and not death! Instead of the bad news of the death of Jesus, the Good News of his Resurrection! Both of them experience life - and life in abundance! (Jn 10, 10). This is a sign that the Spirit of Jesus acts in them!

Thoughts:

- Both of them say: "We were hoping, but...!" Have you ever seen a situation of discouragement which has led you to say: "I was hoping, but...!"? What did you do about it?
- How do you read, use and interpret the Bible? Have you ever felt your heart burning when reading and meditating on the Word of God? Do you read the Bible alone or are you part of a Bible group?

Prayer:

Sometimes, Lord, the problem's just too big.

What can I do?

I plod on, resigned.

I pray, but I don't hear a reply.

I shout, but my voice gets lost in the dead drapes of ordinary life.

I can't see a way out,

I'm stuck.

Partly, it's my fault: I made the wrong choice – not evil, just wrong.

Partly, it's just bad luck.

Partly, I've come up against someone who seems unsympathetic - or maybe they just plain don't like me.

Lord, I'm cross and upset and resentful: -

like the disciples were on the road to Emmaus

And I feel like going off, away from it all -

like the disciples on the road.

Lord, remind me you are there, beside me.

You don't need shouting at, because you're close.

If I stopped sulking, I might notice you;

If I stopped talking, I might even hear you.

Shut me up, Lord!

I need patience to listen to your calming voice.

I need to look up to be aware of your friendship.

I do rely on you, but I need to remember that it takes time to work things through.

I need to remember that you have the long view

- like you had when reminding the disciples of the scriptures on the road.

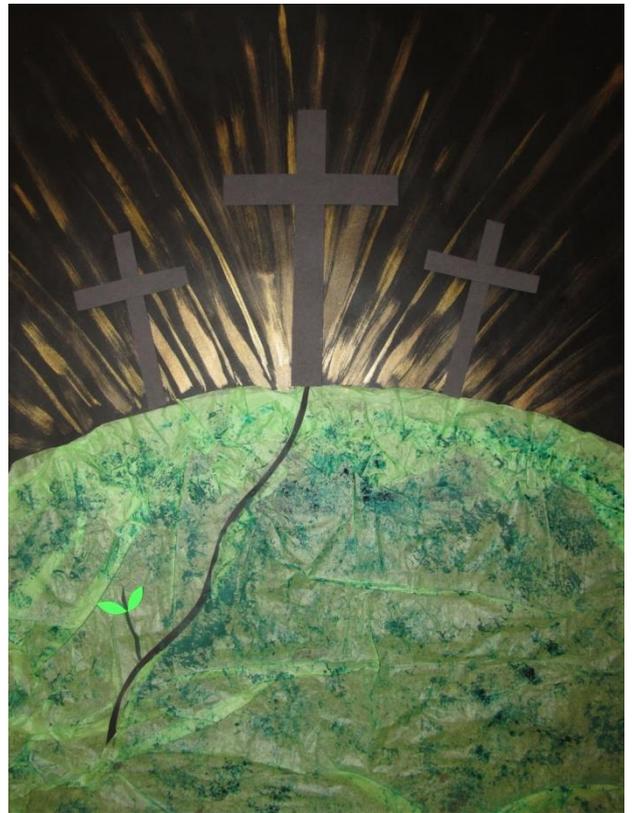
It's difficult, Lord, but help me to trust you.

Help me to recognise you in my family, in my friends,
and especially in the Mass.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for being there.

The Resurrection

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' Then they remembered his words.



When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened. *(Luke 24:1-12)*

The Empty Tomb

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) *(John 20:1-8)*

(The following reflection and prayer were taken from 'Many Voices One Voice' by Eddie Askew.)

Mark 16:1-7I

I HAVE just seen the resurrection — or something very like it. A married couple were interviewed at a meeting I attended. Two years ago Doreen was told she had serious cancer. After surgery, the cancer recurred. Last year she was told she'd probably die before Christmas. Her husband, Tom, is a Baptist minister. A year ago the diagnosis was made that he too needed surgery for cancer. They are both still under medical treatment.

It was an honest and moving interview. They'd not found it easy to come to terms with what had happened, with dying, or with not being around any more; or with the thought that one could be left, lonely. But they'd found today. Accept today, they said, use it, experience it to the full, enjoy it. Don't worry about the future, today is wonderful. "Spring, this year, has never been so beautiful," said Doreen.

Listening to them, watching them, I suddenly realised that you don't need to die to experience the resurrection. It was there in front of me. In the courage. Of course, they've "died". I guess that in facing the stark realities before them, they've died many deaths. Values and attitudes that seemed important must have changed, or disappeared. But Doreen and Tom were alive, are alive, with a quality of life I can't describe but which I can feel and identify.

Someone has described Christians as people of the resurrection living in a Good Friday world. Tom and Doreen certainly are. I don't know what the future holds for them, and neither do they. In one sense it's important, in another sense it doesn't matter at all, because they've begun to live in the resurrection. Hallelujah! Christ is risen.

Thoughts:

"We are an Easter people living in a Good Friday world" – what do you understand by this quote?

Catholics are often accused of living in a perpetual Good Friday. What is meant by this, and is it true? (Think of examples to illustrate your answer!)

Do **you** live the resurrection? How?

Prayer:

Christ is risen. Hallelujah!

It's not always easy, Lord, to live that statement.

Not always easy to believe, when it's preached by old men in dark suits, with faces from which the joy has long drained away:

Like colour from a well-washed shirt.

Hardly remembered: -

Not easy to believe, living in a Good Friday world.
 I can believe in the cross: The headlines in the paper shout its truth. Everyday.
 The suffering. The pain.
 Christ mocked and crucified. Afresh.

I stand with Thomas. Unless I see...Handle the evidence.
 Find hard-edged proof.
 Lord, open my eyes.

I catch a glimmer of the resurrection
 like crocus pushing through snow, purple on white. Still cold.
 I see a gleam of life in daffodil gold, warmer round dark trees.

And suddenly I see the resurrection-splendour
 in human courage.
 In love.
 In the painful, glad acceptance of uncertainty.
 The joyous living of today in the shadow of death.
 In lives touched by your hand.
 Transformed. Turned triumphantly to face your light.
 The stone rolled away. The tomb empty.
 Life ahead, beginning now.

Lord, give me the courage to reach out and take it.
 Amen

Acknowledgements:

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