

## Homily for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter 2018

You have seen it happen. A small child running around a supermarket, full of wonder, enjoying the plethora of goodies to be looked at, touched, and perhaps picked up and eaten. Then an adult, probably a parent, steps in and grabs the child angrily. Sometimes the child is slapped or picked up or strongly told to behave. Then the tears and bellowing follow. Of course, there is often more to the event than meets the eye. Maybe, a distraught mother is at her wits end trying to contain her children and her frustration. One does wonder, if that is the consistent way a parent responds, is such violence towards small children suppressing the joy of life leading to depression, anger or violence in some young adults?

At the other end of life we often meet an elderly person, or perhaps someone with a terminal illness, say "I pray everyday to die," or "I wish I were gone". The struggle to live with incapacity, frustration and pain brings them to admit that the end is near. They do not want to leave the ones they love but they know that they must. Life pulls them in both directions. In sharing that struggle such a person has a great gift to offer us. In being faithful to those they love they have shown us how to live. So that in the end their life is handed over to God.

Between these two, the beginning and end of life, is the rest of us! What have you been doing? Today we hear the end of an account in Luke's Gospel where two disciples had been walking to Emmaus. Unbeknown to them Jesus walked by their side talking with them. They eventually recognised him in the breaking of the bread. Today the Gospel extract tells of their excited return to the other disciples where "they told their story of what had happened on the road and how Jesus had been made known to them at the breaking of bread."

As we are walking through life what story do we have to tell? Is there anything that opened our eyes to the extraordinary wonder of life that we once had as a child? Remember Jesus words, "it is to such as these children that the Kingdom of God belongs." Is there someone who has since changed you completely, like this meeting of the disciples with the risen Lord did for them? For most of my life the resurrection did not mean very much. It was seen simply as proof of Jesus divinity and left at that. Then all we had to do was to try and save one's soul. But only God can save us really. My personal resurrection did not enter the picture except as some vague distant future event.

Think of people like Peter. He who denied Jesus. But Jesus saw in Peter something more than his failure. Or think of Zacchaeus up the tree. His encounter with Jesus changed him. Or the Samaritan woman at the well. Again she became a new woman who evangelised her friends.

One thing that impresses us about these stories is the real sense of companionship between the disciples and their Lord both before and after his death. There was a face to face encounter which transformed them. This experience seems to occur only when they are in communion with each other in joy or in sorrow. Especially as they gathered on the first day of the week. As a result they were changed people who went on to do extraordinary things. This kind of change is truly the beginning of a resurrection. Where have you encountered the Lord in the face of another? It may be a small child. It may be an elderly person at the twilight of life. If we have eyes to see we can recognise the Lord in our midst. Resurrection is not something to read about. It must be experienced in all our encounters.

So what story are you able to tell your children or grandchildren? Not a story of violence one would hope. Nor one which tells of resentment at the needs of children and others dependent on us. But one that affirms the goodness of life and a fullness of joy. A story that gives life even to our last breath. So what transforming encounter with the risen Lord can you tell of?

You may have and not recognised it as the Lord who was with you just like the disciples on the road to Emmaus. But in the Holy Spirit we can become aware of the Lord's sustaining presence at every moment of our lives. The walk is wonderful because we are walking together with the very life of God in us.

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