



3rd Week of Easter: 18<sup>th</sup>/ 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

**“Lord Jesus explain the Scriptures to us”**

This week in conversation with others I have been aware of the way life in the Pandemic has led to anxiety, stress and depression: parents having a lot to cope with, especially with support for children in learning, while carrying on with their normal life and work; teachers juggling “normal” teaching for children in school, due to parents being “essential” workers, and at the same time conducting online learning for others; husbands / wives / partners caring for loved ones in hospital or in care, and not being able to visit in the normal way; the list goes on. Little wonder, when I was walking through Solihull town centre on Monday this week I saw so many people sitting out on a very cold day talking and taking advantage of having an outdoor drink with others: a bit of “normality” you could say!

So does our practice of Faith help in this situation of anxiety, stress and depression too?

The Gospel for the Third Sunday of Easter begins: “The disciples told their story of what had happened on the road and how they recognised Jesus at the Breaking of the Bread.” It is referring to what took place on the road to Emmaus which is recounted earlier in Chapter 24 of St Luke and features in Year A cycle of readings: there Jesus joined the two disciples walking along discussing the passion and death of Jesus “their faces downcast”. Of course they were “down” - all their hopes seemed to be at an end. It is a wonderful account of their meeting the Risen Jesus and His explaining to them the whole event as part of God’s plan. Afterwards 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.” It was at the Eucharist, the Breaking of Bread, that they recognized Jesus Risen from the Dead.

And this Third Sunday, second cycle of readings, we have the continuation of that same Chapter 24 of St Luke: Jesus appears again to the larger group of disciples. He says “why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts?” Jesus addresses the real-life situation of His disciples: they are alarmed, they are downcast, they are filled with doubts. But, the reality of His suffering and death leading to the Resurrection speaks to this. The Cross is part of life, but walking with the Risen Lord Jesus, especially in prayer and the Breaking of Bread leads to joy. The Gospel recounts this: “Their joy was so great that they could not believe it, and they stood dumbfounded.” Yes, the suffering and death that led to their being downcast, was now overcome in meeting the Risen Lord.

The Church encourages us to reflect and pray on the Resurrection appearances of Jesus in the time of Eastertide: new life comes through suffering and death. That is God’s plan, fulfilled in Jesus. To help us in our prayer for strength through difficult times Aleteia, the

**Monsignor Daniel McHugh**

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



online Catholic resource, has a collection of prayers this week. This one is under the heading “Find strength in the heart of Jesus with this prayer”:

Every human heart has its weakness, and it is in this precisely that you must especially propose to yourself, the example of this most holy Heart.

*“What is there wanting in you, O divine Heart, of the qualities of which I stand most in need?”*

*O living Temple of the divinity, **my heart is in darkness, and in you the fullness of wisdom inhabits corporally**—my heart is weak, yours is the throne of omnipotence—my heart is fearful and afflicted, oppressed, and craving after happiness, but despairing to find it; in you alone, and in imitating you is my true happiness to be sought, and in you for the future I will seek it.*

*Grant me the strength I need and may I always turn to your Divine Heart in my times of trial. Amen.”*

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