



3rd Week of Easter 23rd/24th April 2023 – Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“The Disciples recognised Jesus in the breaking of bread, alleluia” (Luke 24:35)

This week, on Wednesday, I celebrated Mass in the Cathedral. I always like to give a short reflection after the Gospel, and the readings on this day in the second week of Easter were especially welcome. I began with the Gospel itself which was from St John Chapter 3 on Jesus addressing Nicodemus and explaining His coming into the world in terms of light and darkness. Jesus is both Son of Man and Son of God: He reveals God's love and desire for our Salvation. The question posed for us by the reading was whether we prefer the light to darkness. We are still in Easter time, still celebrating His Resurrection and we are challenged by the Church to consider whether by our lives we show acceptance of His light or whether we prefer darkness. My reflection was that we are somewhere in between preferring the light, but still clinging to darkness.

Then we had the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles as is the custom at this time of year: we were given a section from Chapter 5 where Peter and the Apostles were imprisoned for proclaiming the Gospel that Jesus had risen from the dead and that through Him we have new life. I reflected that their proclamation of the Gospel was evidence of the Spirit at work in them, further evidence of this was the miracle of their being set free from prison. This personal experience impacted their lives in the way they spoke out boldly risking everything for the Truth of the Rising of Jesus from the dead. The Apostles were speaking from personal experience and conviction.

The account of the encounter with the Risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus is a favourite passage from the Gospels, especially how the disciples recognise Jesus in the Breaking of Bread, the Eucharist. As with the reality of the experience of being set free from prison led Peter and the Apostles to speak out boldly, so the two disciples on the road to Emmaus – we're told – 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. They set out instantly and returned to Jerusalem - then they told their story of what had happened and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread”*.

Filled with the joy of the encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist, they too gave witness to the truth that He had risen.

Each of us have a story to tell of meeting Jesus on our journey in life in a way that has led us to witness to the reality of His presence and its impact on the direction we have taken. But like the two disciples who met the Risen Jesus in the Breaking of Bread which is central to the Gospel for the Third Sunday, it is in the Eucharist that we as a Community meet Him anew: listening to His Word in the Scriptures and in the

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explanation of the Scriptures in the Homily and being nourished by the Eucharistic Bread broken for us at the Lord's Table, the Altar of God. It is from this living encounter that we are inspired to go out to change the world through word and deed.

Returning to the Cathedral where this Reflection began: I noted a prayer displayed for the priest before celebrating the Mass, a reminder to him of the Sacred Act he is about to lead. I have always thought the few moments in Church before Mass begins are important for all of us to focus on what we as the Congregation are about to participate in; the same is true I think at the end of Mass when we can reflect on what we are taking to the world from the Celebration.

We should not be so distracted that we don't take time like the Disciples "who recognised Jesus in the breaking of bread" and went forth with an "Alleluia" in their hearts; the word in the Communion Antiphon that expresses our joy at meeting the Risen Jesus in the Eucharist today, and throughout Easter time.

I conclude with this prayer asking the intercession of our Patron St George that we like him, together with the Apostles and Disciples may be witnesses to the risen Lord.

Collect from the Solemnity:

God of hosts,
who so kindled the fire of charity
in the heart of Saint George your martyr
that he bore witness to the risen Lord
both by his life and by his death,
grant us through his intercession, we pray,
the same faith and power of love,
that we who rejoice in his triumph
may be led to share with him
in the fullness of the resurrection.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

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