

3rd Sunday of Easter A



Show us, Lord, the path of life. (Ps 15:11)

First Reading

Acts 2:14.22-28

On the day of Pentecost Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd in a loud voice: "Men of Israel, listen to what I am going to say: Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God by the miracles and portents and signs that God worked through him when he was among you, as you all know. This man, who was put into your power by the deliberate intention and foreknowledge of God, you took and had crucified by men outside the Law. You killed him, but God raised him to life, freeing him from the pangs of Hades; for it was impossible for him to be held in its power since, as David says of him: I saw the Lord before me always, for with him at my right hand nothing can shake me. So my heart was glad and my tongue cried out with joy; my body, too, will rest in the hope that you will not abandon my soul to Hades nor allow your holy one to experience corruption. You have made known the way of life to me, you will fill me with gladness through your presence."

Second Reading

1 Peter 1:17-21

If you are acknowledging as your Father one who has no favourites and judges every one according to what he has done, you must be scrupulously careful as long as you are living away from your home. Remember, the ransom that was paid to free you from the useless way of life your ancestors handed down was not paid in anything corruptible, neither in silver nor gold, but in the precious blood of a lamb without spot or stain, namely Christ; who, though known since before the world was made, has been revealed only in our time, the end of the ages, for your sake. Through him you now have faith in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory for that very reason – so that you would have faith and hope in God.

Gospel

Luke 24:13-35

Two of the disciples of Jesus were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. He said to them, "What matters are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped short, their faces downcast.

Then one of them called Cleopas, answered him, "You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days." "What things?" he asked. "All about Jesus of Nazareth," they answered, "who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they did not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing."

Then he said to them, "You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?" Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself.

When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. "It is nearly evening," they said, "and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then 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?"

They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, "Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

Meditation

The people of God have always been a pilgrim people. Since the beginning of Lent, we have traced their steps from the garden of Eden to the garden of the empty tomb. It was never an easy journey. It led them through wilderness and through desert. It took them from slavery to the land of promise, to exile and back again. They knew what it was to walk in the valley of the shadow of death. Yet they never travelled unaccompanied. The ever-faithful God revealed his presence to them in fire and cloud, in bread from heaven and water from the rock, and in the word of the prophets.

Their story culminated in the great paschal journey undertaken in their name by Jesus Christ. It is that journey from death to life which we celebrate on all these Sundays of Easter, as today's first readings remind us.

But the journey has not ended. We, the people of God, are still in pilgrimage toward the kingdom of God in its fullness. And it is no easy journey. It sometimes leads us, as it led the first disciples, through the wilderness of doubt and the desert of despair. It takes us from hope to disappointment to confusion and back again. It is a journey marked by the sign of the cross. Yet we, like our forebears, never travel unaccompanied. The Lord whom we follow points out the road through the word proclaimed in our assemblies. He reveals himself as food for the journey in the breaking of the bread.

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Gospel

John 21:1-14

Jesus showed himself again to the disciples. It was by the Sea of Tiberias, and it happened like this: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael from Cana in

Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two more of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing." They replied, "We'll come with you." They went out and got into the boat but caught nothing that night.

It was light by now and there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. Jesus called out, "Have you caught anything, friends?" And when they answered, "No", he said, "Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find something." So they dropped the net, and there were so many fish that they could not haul it in. The disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." At these words "It is the Lord", Simon Peter, who had practically nothing on, wrapped his cloak round him and jumped into the water. The other disciples came on in the boat, towing the net and the fish; they were only about a hundred yards from land.

As soon as they came ashore they saw that there was some bread there, and a charcoal fire with fish cooking on it. Jesus said, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore, full of big fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them; and in spite of there being so many the net was not broken. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples was bold enough to ask, "Who are you?"; they knew quite well it was the Lord. Jesus then stepped forward, took the bread and gave it to them, and the same with the fish. This was the third time that Jesus showed himself to the disciples after rising from the dead.

Meditation

Christ's appearance to seven of his disciples on the shore of Lake Tiberias marks an important step in the growth of paschal faith. As the Father sent his Son into the world, so the Lord Jesus will send his disciples on mission. The overwhelming catch of fish from the lake is a living parable of the church's apostolic activity. The Risen Christ is the source of its fruitfulness.

Just like the apostles who went back to their nets after the tragedy of the passion, we too are sometimes tempted to lose hope. What if our faith in the resurrection were not more than a religious tradition? What if Christ no longer dwells in this established Church, which seems so rooted in defensiveness and little given to apostolic boldness? If that were so, we might be tempted to return to the reassuring banality of our everyday tasks. Or we might be tempted to organize ourselves into a Christian ghetto, separate from those who might upset our certitudes. We could dream nostalgically of the Church of former times when faith was taken for granted and religion ruled society.

But Christ stands on the shores of this world, more involved than ever, and he calls us to throw away our nets. We do not always recognize him at the first meeting, but he is there. He calls to us from the heart of our communities, in the commitments of those who seek the truth, who love and who forgive, who struggle for a better and more just world. He is there above all in that meal where we share his memory.