

### **Acts 2.36-41**

Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

### **Psalms 116**

I love the LORD, because he has heard  
my voice and my supplications.  
Because he inclined his ear to me,  
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.  
The snares of death encompassed me;  
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;  
I suffered distress and anguish.

Then I called on the name of the LORD:  
“O LORD, I pray, save my life!”

Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;  
our God is merciful.  
The LORD protects the simple;  
when I was brought low, he saved me.  
Return, O my soul, to your rest,  
for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

For you have delivered my soul from death,  
my eyes from tears,  
my feet from stumbling.  
I walk before the LORD  
in the land of the living.  
I kept my faith, even when I said,  
“I am greatly afflicted”;

### **1 Peter 1.17-23**

If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have

been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

### **Luke 24. 13-35**

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

I like to leave the preaching of the Gospel reading to someone far better qualified and what a pantheon of people to choose from. This week I lift an article from a Roman Catholic source about a service given by Emeritus Pope Benedict.

The road to Emmaus "is the path of renewal and maturation in faith for all Christians," Pope Benedict told the many thousands of pilgrims that packed St Peter's Square for the Regina Caeli Prayer today at noon.

The Gospel of this Sunday - the third Easter - is the famous story told of the disciples of Emmaus (cf. Lk 24,13-35). It tells of two followers of Christ who, sad and disheartened, left Jerusalem the day after the Sabbath, the third since his death, to go to a nearby village called Emmaus.

Along the road, the risen Jesus came up beside them, but they did not recognize him. Sensing their dejection, he explained on the basis of the Scriptures that the Messiah had to suffer and die to achieve glory. Then he entered a house with them, sat down at table, blessed the bread and broke it, and then they recognized him. But he vanished from their sight, leaving them full of wonder before the broken bread, a new sign of his presence.

The two immediately returned to Jerusalem and told the other disciples what happened.

The fact that archaeologists have not identified the location of Emmaus with any certainty, Benedict said, holds for him a certain value: it "suggests that Emmaus is really everywhere, the road that leads there is the path of every Christian, indeed, every human being."

On our own journeys, the risen Jesus is a travelling companion who "rekindles in our hearts the warmth of faith and hope and the breaking of the bread of eternal life."

Pope Benedict commented that the disciples' encounter with Christ on the Road to Emmaus manifests a crisis of faith. The use of the past tense by one of the unknown disciples says it all: "We hoped, we believed, we followed...but now everything, even Jesus of Nazareth, who had shown Himself to be a prophet mighty in deed and word, even he failed, and we were left disappointed."

"Who has not experienced in life a moment like this?" he said. "Sometimes our faith enters into a

crisis, which, because of negative experiences, makes us feel abandoned and betrayed by the Lord. But the story of Emmaus suggests instead that it is possible to encounter the risen Jesus "still today". Departing from his prepared text, the Holy Father repeated,

"Still today, Jesus speaks to us in the Scripture; still today Jesus gives us his Body and his Blood".

"The road to Emmaus becomes the way of a purification and maturation of our belief in God: the encounter with the risen Christ gives us a deeper faith, one that is authentic, tempered, so to speak, through the fire of Easter, a faith robust because it is from the word of God and the Eucharist, not human ideas."

Concluding his reflection on the Gospel, Pope Benedict said, "This beautiful evangelical text already contains the structure of the Mass: in the first part listening to the Word through the Scriptures; second in the Eucharistic liturgy and communion with Christ present in the sacrament of his Body and his Blood. Nourishing ourselves in this twofold meal, the Church builds itself up and is renewed every day in faith, hope and charity."

"Through the intercession of Mary, we pray that each and every Christian community, reliving the experience of the disciples of Emmaus, rediscover the transforming grace of the risen Lord."

Go and be witnesses of the mercy of God, the spring of hope for every man and for the entire world. Made the risen Lord be with you always!"

