

Sunday Message

3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER

THE WORD

Year A • 19 April 2026 • Psalter Week 3



REFLECT

Faith is a journey. Czech theologian Fr Tomas Halik says Jesus did not come to offer us a doctrine – a set of beliefs – but rather a life-long journey towards the total transformation of every aspect of our lives, including all our relationships – to ourselves, to others, to society, to nature and to God. It's no surprise, he says, that the early Christians were known as the Community of the Way.

The nature of a journey is that it's never static. A mature faith requires constant growth. Hopefully, our faith today is more mature than when we were young. Halik says that even critical questions, doubts and crises of faith can be a valuable stimulus on this faith journey. We know we don't have it all figured out, that we'll never have it all figured out. To think we have all the answers is to become fundamentalist, intolerant, triumphalist, closed off from dialogue and encounter, closed off from the God of surprises. Cardinal Newman said that to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often. To keep maturing in the faith is a life-long journey.

A word Pope Francis uses in his letter on family life, *Amoris laetitia* (The Joy of Love), is 'gradualism'. We are a work in progress, he says. Families are a work in progress. No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; "families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love... All of us are called to keep striving towards something greater than ourselves and our families, and every family must feel this constant impulse."

We must always aim at being better disciples of Jesus. To grow all the time – in holiness, patience, compassion, love. The pilgrim journey towards perfection is something we won't realise this side of the grave, but which we must keep striving towards.

There is an echo of this in the preamble to the United States Constitution when it talks about forming a 'more perfect union'. It's an acknowledgement that there is still work to do to form a perfect union, a distance to go before it occurs, that it will never fully happen. Gradualism describes our day-by-day journey towards perfection, towards transformation, towards God. Just as the two disciples grew in knowledge of God on their journey to Emmaus, we seek to grow ever closer to God on our journey through life. ■

The journey of two disciples to Emmaus is one of the treasures of Luke's Gospel. It's a perfect short story of a walk along the road from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus.

It would probably have taken about two hours to cover the seven-mile trip. It seems that the pair cannot wait to get away from Jerusalem and, as soon as the Sabbath ends, they hit the road. The previous days had brought them on a roller coaster of emotions: from the high of the Passover to the shocking arrest and execution of Jesus.

As they walk along, a stranger joins them. Noticing their downcast faces, he asks them what's wrong. And they tell him everything. Jesus of Nazareth whom they regarded as a prophet of God had let them down. He had been executed. Stranger still, a rumour was circulating that his grave had been found empty and that he had been raised from the dead.

The stranger's reaction must have surprised them. He begins by telling them that they had failed to understand what was happening. They thought the Messiah would be a military leader but scripture clearly showed that the Messiah would suffer "and so enter into his glory". As they continue their journey, the stranger gives them a crash course on the Bible.

Hearing his words, something in the pair begins to change. They can now see what Jesus' passion was all about. Everything is falling into place. They have more to learn but they have reached their destination, and so they persuade the stranger to join them for a meal. Then the stranger does something they had seen Jesus do in the past: he takes the bread, prays over it and gives it to them. The penny drops. Their companion on the road is Jesus himself but he disappears as mysteriously as he had joined them. Immediately, they rush back to Jerusalem. There they find the community they had left that morning, bewildered and lost, now full of confidence that Jesus has indeed risen. They tell their story of how they had met him on the road.

The walk to Emmaus might have taken two hours. But in another sense, the journey to Emmaus probably took many years in that it took the bewildered disciples who had witnessed Jesus' death a long time to put it all together, to make sense both of the story of his stay among them and of how all that happened was part of God's plan as revealed in the Old Testament. Many years too to discover how in the broken bread of the Eucharist, Jesus continued to be present for and with them. ■

SAY

Say this prayer based on today's Gospel: "Stay with us, Lord Jesus, as evening falls. Be our companion on our way. In your mercy inflame our hearts and raise our hopes, so that, in union with all our brothers and sisters, we may recognise you in the scriptures and in the breaking of bread."

(Evening Prayer, Monday Week 4)

PRAY

Pray for all those crushed by hopelessness or despair, that they may know that God is with them.

LEARN

The Emmaus story shows that we meet the risen Christ in many different ways – in the scriptures, in the Eucharist, in the offer of hospitality to the stranger. All we need are eyes to see.

DO

Think about your faith journey. In what ways has your faith changed over the years?

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*Cry out with joy to God, all the earth;
O sing to the glory of his name.
O render him glorious praise, alleluia.*

COLLECT

May your people exult for ever, O God,
in renewed youthfulness of spirit,
so that, rejoicing now in the restored glory of our adoption,
we may look forward in confident hope
to the rejoicing of the day of resurrection... **Amen.**

FIRST READING Acts 2:14, 22-33

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

On the day of Pentecost Peter, standing with the Eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst – as you yourselves know – this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

'For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence."

'Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you yourselves are seeing and hearing.'

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 16(15):1-2a. 5. 7-8. 9-10. 11. R. 11a

R: O Lord, you will show me the path of life.

Or **Alleluia.**

1. Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
I say to the LORD, 'You are my Lord.'
O LORD, it is you who are my portion and cup;
you yourself who secure my lot. **R.**
2. I will bless the LORD who gives me counsel,
who even at night directs my heart.
I keep the LORD before me always;
with him at my right hand, I shall not be moved. **R.**
3. And so, my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;
even my flesh shall rest in hope.
For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
nor let your holy one see corruption. **R.**
4. You will show me the path of life,
the fullness of joy in your presence,
at your right hand, bliss for ever. **R.**

SECOND READING 1 Peter 1:17-21

A reading from the first letter of St Peter.

Beloved: If you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are

believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL cf. Luke 24:32

R: Alleluia, alleluia.

Lord Jesus, open the Scriptures to us;
make our hearts burn within us when you speak to us.

R: Alleluia.

GOSPEL Luke 24:13-35

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

On the first day of the week, two of the disciples of Jesus were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognising him. And he said to them, 'What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?' And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?' And he said to them, 'What things?' And they said to him, 'Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up 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 happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even 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 him they did not see.' And he said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, for it is towards evening and the day is now far spent.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognised him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?' And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the Eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Receive, O Lord, we pray,
these offerings of your exultant Church,
and, as you have given her cause for such great gladness,
grant also that the gifts we bring
may bear fruit in perpetual happiness... **Amen.**

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**The disciples recognised the Lord Jesus
in the breaking of the bread, alleluia.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Look with kindness upon your people, O Lord,
and grant, we pray,
that those you were pleased to renew by eternal mysteries
may attain in their flesh
the incorruptible glory of the resurrection... **Amen.**