Third Week of Easter

## **Sunday 15 April – Third Sunday of Easter**

Scripture: Acts 3: 13-15, 17-19; Psalm 4; 1 John 2: 1-5; Luke 24: 35-48

*The disciples told their story of what had happened on the road, and how Jesus had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

Telling our faith story is something many of us feel a bit uncomfortable about but the simple truth is, if we do not tell others about it how will they know? We sometimes think we have to be experts –to use religious terminology – and not make any theological errors in how we talk about our faith. In the face of our fears, the two disciples in today’s gospel remind us that it does not have to be difficult or complicated. We simply have to tell our stories in our own words – allowing the reality of what we have experienced to shine through.

* How do you think the disciples told the story of their encounter on the road to Emmaus? Their mood – their emotion – their words?
* What convinces you when people tell you things about their faith?

Spend some time reflecting on the stories around your own faith. Think about something you have heard that has been special – or a place or a person who has deepened your sense of God’s love for you. Try to put it into simple words that – when a suitable moment arises – you can share it with someone who needs to hear it.

*KT*

## **Monday 16 April (St Bernadette Soubirous)**

Scripture: Acts 6: 8-15; Psalm 118; John 6: 22-29

*Jesus said, ‘Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.’*

It is unlikely that Jesus is saying that we do not need to work. He himself worked as a carpenter – and most people he grew up with would have had a similar trade or way of making a living. He does not seem to have encouraged people to beg but restored those who did back to being able to support themselves. Perhaps he is reminding us of the distinction between what will sustain us physically –and which is, of course, important but not at the expense of losing sight of the food that feeds our souls and prepares us for eternal life.

* What incidents in Jesus’ ministry show him restoring people to a normal, working life?
* How do we balance keeping our physical bodies well-nourished – and our souls?

Reflect today on your own balance between physical and spiritual food. Think about how well you nourish your body – and your soul. Bring any thoughts or concerns into a time of prayer with the Lord.

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## **Tuesday 17 April**

Scripture: Acts 7: 51-8:1; Psalm 30; John 6: 30-35

*Jesus said, ‘The bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ They said to him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’*

Many of the people who have followed Jesus are in search of a miracle like the one they had witnessed when Jesus fed the 5000. Their response to the words of Jesus hints at something deeper. They do want to be fed physically – but there is a yearning there too. Jesus has spoken to a bread from God that gives life to the world and, somewhere deep within them, there arises a longing for this bread too.

* What is the difference between a physical and spiritual hunger?
* What awakens a spiritual hunger in people?

Think today of times when you have felt a spiritual hunger or yearning. What caused it? And what helped to fill it? If you are a time of such a hunger, bring it to the Lord and ask him to satisfy it.

*KT*

## **Wednesday 18 April (Third Week of Eastertide)**

Scripture: Acts 8: 1-8; Psalm 65; John 6: 35-40

*Jesus said, ‘Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.’*

This is a beautiful reminder of why Jesus came into the world. He assures anyone who comes to him that he will not drive them away. So often, we meet people who feel they are unworthy – their lives seem a mess and they do not believe that there is a way to God for them. If we meet someone in those situations these are good words to remember – if we help people to come to Jesus, he will not drive them away but welcome them in the name of the one who sent him into the world.

* When have you felt unable to come to the Lord?
* Who do you know who fears being rejected by Christ if they try to make their way to him?

Spend some time today reflecting on those who struggle with a fear of rejection or unworthiness. If you know someone in particular pray for them – that they will take the risk of coming to the Lord and encounter his love and mercy.

*KT*

## **Thursday 19 April**

Scripture: Acts 8: 26-40; Psalm 65; John 6: 44-51

*Jesus said, ‘No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day.’*

If we look around the world, we can see that many people are drawn to faith but also that many are not. What Jesus seems to be highlighting is that people need something within them before they can be drawn to him. Our belief is that a yearning for God is hard-wired into every human being but it is clear that things can happen – or not happen – that stifle that desire. When what seems to be at stake is eternal life this give urgency to whatever we can do to help to reawaken it.

* What are some of the things that happen that stifle the desire for God?
* What are some of the things that fail to happen in someone’s life which result in their desire for God failing to develop?

Pray today for those people who seem not to have a yearning for God – for Jesus. Pray for healing – or inspiration – or courage – for whatever you sense that they need to be awakened to the love God has for them – and to desire to draw closer to it.

*KT*

## **Friday 20 April**

Scripture: Acts 9: 1-20; Psalm 116; John 6: 52-59

*The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’*

The Jewish people had never accepted human sacrifice – since the day Abraham was told to spare his son, Isaac. They had never performed any of the rites in which they cannibalised the bodies of enemies. So their questioning of what Jesus says is understandable – as is their revulsion as they struggle to understand what eating his flesh and drinking his blood can mean. Just what *does* it mean to us?

* Why do you think the Jews who heard Jesus struggled with his teaching?
* How might you explain what we believe about the Eucharist to others?

The words Jesus uses about eating his flesh and drinking his blood are as difficult in today’s world as they were in Jesus’ time. Spend time today reflecting on how you might help others to understand what we receive in Communion. Bring any questions into a time of prayer – seeking Christ’s advice on what to say or do.

KT

## **Saturday 21 April (St Anselm of Canterbury)**

Scripture: Acts 9: 31-42; Psalm 115; John 6: 60-69

*Because of Jesus’ teaching, many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, ‘Do you also wish to go away?’*

There are times in every Christian’s life when an aspect of our teaching is difficult to understand or accept. The challenge then is what we do – do we reject it or turn away from faith – ignore the questions – or try to find out the reasons behind it? The decision may be different in different circumstances – but there is always a choice.

* When have you struggled with something in the scriptures or in Church teaching?
* What helps you to keep faith – not to go away – the face of doubts or questions?

If you have questions or doubts that seem to be challenging your faith bring them into a time of prayer. Place them honestly before the Lord and be open to ideas or suggestions that seem to arise for taking things forward – to addressing the questions and helping to deepen your faith.

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