

## Sunday, April 23, 2023 – Third Sunday of Easter

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### Introduction

Today's gospel begins with two disciples walking to Emmaus, overcome with sadness, loss, and disappointment. They had hoped Jesus, who was crucified, would be the one to redeem Israel! Yet the risen Christ walks with them and then opens their eyes in the breaking of the bread. Each Sunday our hearts burn within us as the scriptures are proclaimed and Christ appears to us as bread is broken and wine is poured. The story of Emmaus becomes the pattern of our worship each Lord's day.

### Prayer of the Day

O God, your Son makes himself known to all his disciples in the breaking of bread. Open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in his redeeming work, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### First Reading: Acts 2:14a, 36-41

*Today's reading is the conclusion of Peter's sermon preached following the giving of the Holy Spirit to the apostles on the day of Pentecost. The center of his preaching is the bold declaration that God has made the crucified Jesus both Lord and Christ.*

<sup>14a</sup>Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed [the crowd], <sup>36</sup>"Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified."

<sup>37</sup>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?" <sup>38</sup>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. <sup>39</sup>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." <sup>40</sup>And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." <sup>41</sup>So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

### Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

<sup>1</sup>I love the LORD, who has | heard my voice,  
and listened to my | supplication,

<sup>2</sup>**for the LORD has given | ear to me**  
**whenev- | er I called.**

<sup>3</sup>The cords of death entangled me; the anguish of the grave | came upon me;  
I came to | grief and sorrow.

<sup>4</sup>**Then I called upon the name | of the LORD:**  
**“O LORD, I pray you, | save my life.”**

<sup>12</sup>How shall I re- | pay the LORD  
for all the good things God has | done for me?

<sup>13</sup>**I will lift the cup | of salvation**  
**and call on the name | of the LORD.**

<sup>14</sup>I will fulfill my vows | to the LORD  
in the presence of | all God’s people.

<sup>15</sup>**Precious in your | sight, O LORD,**  
**is the death | of your servants.**

<sup>16</sup>O LORD, truly I | am your servant;  
I am your servant, the child of your handmaid; you have freed me | from my bonds.

<sup>17</sup>**I will offer you the sacrifice | of thanksgiving**  
**and call upon the name | of the LORD.**

<sup>18</sup>I will fulfill my vows | to the LORD  
in the presence of | all God’s people,

<sup>19</sup>**in the courts of | the LORD’s house,**  
**in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. | Hallelujah!**

## **Second Reading: 1 Peter 1:17-23**

*The imagery of exile is used to help the readers of this letter understand that they are strangers in a strange land. Christians no longer belong to this age. Through the death of Christ we belong to God, so that our focus, faith, and hope are no longer on such things as silver or gold.*

<sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, <sup>19</sup>but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. <sup>20</sup>He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. <sup>21</sup>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.

<sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

## Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

*The colourful story of Jesus' appearance to two disciples on the road to Emmaus answers the question of how Jesus is to be recognized among us. Here, he is revealed through the scriptures and in the breaking of bread.*

<sup>13</sup>Now on that same day [when Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene,] two [disciples] were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup>and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup>While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup>but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup>And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup>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?" <sup>19</sup>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, <sup>20</sup>and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup>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. <sup>22</sup>Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup>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. <sup>24</sup>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." <sup>25</sup>Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! <sup>26</sup>Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" <sup>27</sup>Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

<sup>28</sup>As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup>Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup>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?" <sup>33</sup>That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. <sup>34</sup>They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" <sup>35</sup>Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

## Prayers of Intercession

United in the hope and joy of the resurrection, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need, saying “hear us, O God,” and responding, “your mercy is great.”

*A brief silence.*

Ever-present God, you make yourself known in the breaking of the bread and in the bonds of community. Reveal yourself to us in the faces of all we meet. Strengthened by your body and blood, let us boldly live out your good news. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

As we know you in the breaking of the bread, we know you in the grains of the field and the flowing waters. Care for the earth you lovingly create. Strengthen those who safeguard threatened land and water. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You are the authority to whom we dedicate our lives (*like Toyohiko Kagawa, whom we commemorate today*). Help us keep the needs of those most vulnerable at the forefront of our community. Move us to care for any who are disregarded or oppressed. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Mothering God, you feed and comfort those who hunger. Open the hearts of those who hoard resources and lead them to share your abundance. We pray for anyone hungering for your comforting presence this day (*especially*). Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You pour out your love on those who are oppressed. Support and comfort anyone who is marginalized by gender or sexuality and those whose stories are not believed. Form this community to listen faithfully and speak honestly in our ministry together. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We remember with thanksgiving all your beloved saints (*especially*). As you have raised them to eternal life, abide with us in your promise of resurrection. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Rejoicing in the victory of Christ’s resurrection, we lift our prayers and praise to you, almighty and eternal God; through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.  
**Amen.**

## ***A reflection for this Third Sunday of Easter...***

### Change of Heart

The people who hear Peter's testimony and preaching are cut to the heart. The writer of 1 Peter instructs believers to love deeply from the heart. The disciples who encounter the risen Christ notice afterward that their hearts were "burning" within them as Jesus reveals the scriptures and then himself to them in the breaking of the bread. Whether a call to repentance, hope, recognition, or love, people are deeply affected by encounters with the one raised from death to become followers of Jesus' way. They not only turn from their sin and doubt but literally change direction, going back from Emmaus to Jerusalem with renewed courage, faith, and hope. These heart-changing encounters with Jesus fulfill a promise from God for the whole community, from those who have lived a long life to those who are children.

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