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# 3rd Sunday of Easter

**Date:** Sunday, April 30, 2017 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** A
**First Reading:** Acts 2:14, 22–33
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 16:1–2, 5, 7–11 | **Response:** Psalm 16:11a
**Second Reading:** 1 Peter 1:17–21
**Gospel Acclamation:** Luke 24:32
**Gospel Reading:** Luke 24:13–35
**Preached at:** the Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Braamfontein **in the** Archdiocese of Johannesburg, South Africa**.**

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This Sunday's Gospel reading from Saint Luke is the familiar story of the Disciples on the Road to Emmaus. This story of the journey to Emmaus is both a literal and a spiritual journey. On the one hand, it recounts the story of two disciples who, after the crucifixion, death and resurrection of our Lord, walk seven miles from Jerusalem to their village of Emmaus. And on the other hand, it outlines for us the journey that we all take from not recognizing Jesus, to understanding what the Scripture says about Him, to encountering and recognizing Him for who He is, and finally to our giving witness of what we have experienced ourselves.

I think that there are five things that we can learn from this passage of scripture: The first is that Jesus seeks us. Jesus finds these two companions distraught as they walk away from Jerusalem and so He seeks them out so they could meet him face-to-face, heart-to-heart and be transformed and encouraged in their grief. We should remember that on our own journey of life, Jesus is continually seeking us out, and desiring to find us. Even as Jesus seeks them, however, they do not recognize Him, and I think this is because of three reasons, some of which might apply to us as well: The first reason is that God did not want them to recognize Him. They were kept from recognizing Jesus because God had a purpose in blinding their eyes from reality. Jesus only gradually reveals Himself in order to allow them to learn certain lessons about trusting in God's promises.

The second reason is that things did not happen as they had expected – they had preconceived ideas of how things should be and this preconception did not take into account how God works. They lacked faith and the vision to perceive the

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resurrection, and so they dismissed the whole thing as a mere failure, as misplaced hope and trust in their one Messiah. We can learn from this that God's ways are not our ways. What we consider to be failure or defeat might not be so in the eyes of God. It might just be a necessary step to something truly greater.

Finally, the two on the road to Emmaus had little faith – Jesus even said to them, "you men of little faith, so slow to believe". This brings me to the second lesson, since in saying this, Jesus opens their eyes — He uses the power of His healing word to take away their incredulity and their lack of vision. We are told that His word felt like a fire in their hearts as it healed their doubts and their confusion. My brothers and sistesr, the Word of God is truly Spirit and Life in your life and my life. Today we are invited to listen to the Word of Christ so it can recreate us and give us a fresh beginning. How great a prayer is it to say 'Lord, help me to see as you see' – this is what happened to the disciples, they were able to understand the Scriptures as He understood them, for the first time to see the world through Jesus' eyes, and it was truly transformative!

The third lesson is that Jesus reveals Himself as he speaks the Word and finally breaks the bread. Breaking the bread and sharing a meal with someone is intimate. We commemorate these actions every week at Mass. Mass is meant to be an intimate encounter with the Lord. In the intimacy of sharing our life with Christ, we get to know Him and experience Him. We can always give thanks for this experience.

The fourth lessons is that Jesus moves them, and all of us, to share our experience of Him. When your eyes have been opened, you will want others to have their eyes opened. The Gospel is truly infectious in that way – there is Good News and we cannot keep quiet about it. This does not mean that we have to be converting everyone we come across, but by the way we live our life, by the values we choose to adopt and by the way we choose to behave, others should see how being a Christian has truly affected us. If there is no difference between the way we live, and those of our friends who don't believe – we must ask ourselves have we truly allowed Christian Hope to permeate our life, have we allowed Christian Love to fill our life, do we possess the Christian Faith? If not, let us ask for that gift now, since it was faith that was restored in the disciples on the way to Emmaus and they immediately went out to tell others that Jesus Christ is risen.

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This is our fifth and final lesson: that we are all called to proclaim the Word of Christ, to heal the world and all humanity of its blindness and doubts and fears. But this will only happen if we ourselves, like those two disciples, experience in a deep way Christ speaking to us, and if we allow our hearts to burn as we hear His word.

Let us tonight recall a moment when we heard God speak to us. Not to the crowd, but when he spoke to us, individually. Let us recall the circumstances of that conversation and give thanks that God cares for each of us. If you would permit to suggest some homework for today, that before you go to bed this evening, spend a few minutes talking to God, sharing what is troubling you and what you need to be freed from; what you don't understand, and what you want to know from Him. Bring all of yourself to God, and listen to what he tells you, and feel your heart burn within you again – or perhaps really feel it for the first time.

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