

Holy Trinity Anglican Church  
Easter 3  
April 18, 2021  
Reverend Michael Fleming

Celebrant: The parishes of the Diocese of Ottawa are located on the the unceded territory of the Algonquin peoples.

All: **May we live together in harmony and peace.**

Celebrant: Alleluia! Christ is risen!

All: **The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Celebrant: May his grace and peace be with you.

All: **May he fill our hearts with joy. Alleluia!**

Celebrant: Almighty God,

All: **To you all hearts are open**

**all desires known,**

**and from you no secrets are hidden.**

**Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts**

**by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,**

**that we may perfectly love you,**

**and worthily magnify your holy name;**

**through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Celebrant: Glory to God in the highest,

All: **And peace to his people on earth**

**Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father,**

**We worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your Glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God,**

**You take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;**

**You are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,**

**You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,**

**In the glory of God the Father. Amen**

Celebrant: O God, your Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread.

Open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in his redeeming work, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. **Amen**

The First Reading is from the book of Acts, Chapter 3, Verses 12 to 19

When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go.

You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

“Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer.

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

#### Psalm 4

Answer me when I call, O God, defender of my cause; you set me free when I am hard-pressed; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

**You mortals, how long will you dishonour my glory; how long will you worship dumb idols and run after false gods?”**

Know that the Lord does wonders for the faithful; when I call upon the Lord, he will hear me.

**Tremble, then, and do not sin; speak to your heart in silence upon your bed.**

Offer the appointed sacrifices and put your trust in the Lord.

**Many are saying, “Oh, that we might see better times!” Lift up the light of your countenance upon us, O Lord.**

You have put gladness in my heart, more than when grain and wine and oil increase.

**I lie down in peace; at once I fall asleep; for only you, Lord, make me dwell in safety.**

The Second Reading is from the first Book of John, Chapter 3, Verses 1 to 7

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, [\[a\]](#) we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

All: **And also with you**

Celebrant: The Holy Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ According to the blessed St. Luke - 24: 13-35

All: **Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

The Gospel of Christ.

**Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ**

## The Homily - The Emmaus Road

A pilgrimage can be defined as “a journey to a sacred place”. Sometimes, the “sacred” is not what we think it is or should be; sometimes, God makes the journey itself the holy encounter, the sacred space. The gospel story for today tells the tale of a sacred encounter while “on the road” - God in Christ meets Cleopas and his companion where they are. Through conversation and the sharing of a simple meal of fellowship, they are changed forever.

If a pilgrimage is described as a “trek to transformation”, then this Emmaus moment is a true pilgrimage. Once filled with a deep sense of loss, with fear and most likely a touch of anger, the two travellers are turned around both physically and spiritually on their homeward journey. This encounter was to remain with them and define them for the rest of their lives.

Early in the morning, as the sun hovered over the Temple, two persons slipped out of Jerusalem and began their long journey home. Setting their sights on the small village of Imwas, also called Emmaus, they walked with heads down and arms hanging limply at their sides. It was over – the dream had died on a rough cross at the place called Golgotha three days before. With each nail hammered into the tortured flesh of Jesus, a part of the hope and dreams they had shared faded. And now they walked as the defeated ones, heading home. It was over and they simply wanted to return to what had once seemed so safe, so familiar; they longed for the past, the time before Jesus had approached them and invited them to follow him into God’s future.

Their destination was Imwas, some fifteen kilometers northwest of the Holy City, nestled on the side of Mount Ephron. It was a long journey but not an onerous one. They stopped to rest several times in the shade of the acacia trees that edged the road – after all, they were in no great hurry to get home. Each time they rested, they spoke of the horror of what had happened in what had once been for them the city of light and hope and faith. Now, Zion was the heart of darkness for them and the more dust they could kick at the shadows of the great walls, the better. They knew what lay behind them; now they longed for a future divorced from their past. They wanted to go home again.

As the sun began to set, they began to have some difficulty in seeing how the road arched and curved on its journey but they were not fearful – it was after all the path homewards, as familiar as the lines upon their hands and the pain in their hearts. Two thousand years later, Paul Simon would describe it like this: “Homeward bound, I wish I was, homeward bound. Home where my thought’s escaping; home where my music’s playing; home, where my love lies waiting silently for me...”

They didn’t know exactly when IT happened – the stranger just seemed to appear in the glare of the dying sun and, being the hospitable sorts, they invited him to journey with them. As they walked, the stranger asked where they were heading and why they would be on the road at such a dangerous time of the day. The two, immersed in their pain, told him of what had happened to their friend Jesus; of how he had invited them on a journey from the Galilee to glory; of how he had spoken so often of a kingdom of Love; of how he had opened their eyes and hearts to service in this kingdom yet to be and yet at the same time present; of how this gentle man had been denied, betrayed into the hands of the enemy and been cruelly executed. They spoke of their shattered dreams and their deepest desire to go back to not where they came from but to a time before....well, you know...

The stranger stopped and looked behind him through the gathering gloaming mists towards the dome of the great Temple of Herod still partially visible, like a hint on the horizon. Sighing deeply, he began to walk again and as they moved forward, he opened the sacred writings to them as they had never heard the ancient stories before. As they listened to his continuing saga of God's encounters with their ancestors – with Noah and Abraham and Sarah; with Moses and Aaron and Miriam; with Isaac, Jacob, Leah, Rachel, Esau; with Jeremiah and Isaiah and Malachi and Ezra and Haggai; with Ruth and Naomi, with Esther and Eve, their ears began to hear with new sounds, their minds with new thoughts, their hearts with new fire. Never had any of their rabbis or holy teachers ever shared The Story as this stranger was doing on the road and they quite lost track of time and place and space as they went onward.

Nearing a village, the two decided that it was becoming too dangerous to complete the journey home that day – night was galloping towards them and with that the danger of brigands and highwaymen on the prowl. To their left, they saw the lights of a wayside inn and decided that this was where they would temporarily interrupt the journey home until the safety of the morning sun would be with them on the morrow. Turning towards the door, they invited their new friend to join them for an evening meal. As they found a table, ordered a simple fare, they continued to talk until the food arrived. Bowing their heads in prayer, the stranger called for God's blessing upon the food and fellowship which was now to begin. Taking the common loaf of bread, the stranger broke it into three pieces and gave one to Cleopas, one to his companion. But between the breaking, sharing and eating, something inexplicable happened in the experience of the disciples of Jesus. Opening their eyes at the touch of the bread held before them, Cleopas somehow knew who it was who sat at table with them. No longer was He the stranger – it was Jesus. No longer a prophet of the Most High, he was The Christ, the Anointed and Promised One now and forever.

Cleopas lifted his head to look into the eyes of his dead but now alive friend – all he saw was the empty pillow with which Jesus had leaned in to feast. Looking at his companion, Cleopas blurted out, "It is He – It is the Lord" ... and like Mary of Magdala asked the one word question to the empty space where Jesus had once poured wine, "where?"

Not waiting, they rose from table, hastily paid for the meal and ran out the door back to the road and, rather than turning towards Emmaus, home sweet home, they too set their faces like flint towards Jerusalem. They thought nothing of the perils of the dark night - all they wanted now was to retrace their steps to that place where the others still huddled against the terror and the fear. Running as best they could, their hearts were afire with joy; their minds were exploding with the revelation which they had just experienced - their sole desire now was to tell the others what they had seen and heard and experienced in the simple act of bread-breaking!

Entering through the Damascus gate just as the night watch was barring the door, they rushed through the streets until they came to the place where they knew Peter and the others were hiding. Using a pre-arranged knock on the thick wooden door, they burst through as the hinges screamed their complaint against the lateness of the hour and before the fire lit to protect them from all the hobgobblies of their dreams and lives, burst out, "We have seen him; we have walked with him; He is alive!"

One of the hidden clues in this story is the value of community, of its strengths and its fragilities. After the death of Jesus, Cleopas does not travel home alone – he journeys with a companion on the way. He desperately needs the companionship the other can give; he needs a sounding-board as he tries to sort out what has happened, what is happening and what will happen to him and to all the hopes he left on the floor of that upper room; his companion (a friend, a wife, son, daughter – who knows!) shared his need for the physical and emotional presence of a fellow pilgrim on the way. They understood as they journeyed why Jesus had gathered those folk around him – in his utter humanity, Jesus needed the companionship, the fellowship, the simple pleasure of being with like-minded and like-hearted souls. They also realized how fragile community could be – how it could be strained and even broken at any moment. Like many other institutions and organizations, church has been put to the test – can it survive in this pandemic world?; while being unable to meet face to face, are we still able to share heart to heart?; what is happening and what will happen to the “once-was” that so defined us as a people?; can most of us remain in the old place of assuming that others will do all the lifting for us so we will have a sacred place, a sacred time. These revelations are not new – that nestling fellowship of disciples, followers and hangers-on that had once so danced at the prospect of the kingdom now faced the inevitable question, “where do we go from here?” In the midst of all the chaos, in the heart of all the confusion and pain, Jesus walks our roads to Emmaus, opening our hearts and minds to his Father’s dream and love and inviting us to journey in new ways down new paths.

Do we dare to follow?

#### An Affirmation of Faith

Celebrant: Let us affirm our ancient faith in new words.

All: **We are not alone; we live in God’s world. We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus the Word made flesh to reconcile and make new, who works in us and in others by the Spirit. We trust in God. We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God’s presence, to live with respect in creation, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus crucified and risen, our judge and our hope. In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.**

(Affirmation from The United Church of Canada)

#### The Prayers of the People

Celebrant: Risen One, like the disciples on the Emmaus road, we struggle to recognize you in the everyday journey of our lives. We seek your wisdom in the midst of the questions we have about the circumstances in which we find ourselves- circumstances sometimes beyond our control, but often of our own making.

Open our eyes, Light of the world, to your work of transformation in and around us. As we walk with you day by day, may your new life be made manifest in what we say and do to and with others. Help us to understand the power of our words and deeds to hurt or heal; give us graciousness to make all our conversations holy.

All: **Lord, hear and have mercy.**

Celebrant: Just as we desire that our speaking be holy, may our seeing be holy as well. We are bombarded by images every day O Christ that shape our attitudes and our behaviours. As you opened the scriptures and taught them everything, open our eyes to see you in your

Word, in the beauty of nature, in the beauty of other human beings and in the beauty and power of sacred art, music and literature.

All: **Lord, hear and have mercy.**

Celebrant: In our seeing, help us to recognize and welcome the stranger in our midst. May our welcoming of outsiders be a celebration of the gifts and graces of persons who are different from us and not some token tolerance of other languages, cultures and even religious outlooks.

All: **Lord, hear and have mercy.**

Celebrant: Jesus, as darkness descended on the road, you invited the disciples to find shelter and light in and with you. As we continue to journey through the darkness of this pandemic time, we pray that you will show us Light and that we will hear you as you say to us individually and as a collective, "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden; neither do people light a lamp and put it under a table. Instead, they place it on a table where it gives light to everyone. In the same way, let your light so shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

All: **Lord, hear and have mercy.**

Celebrant: Jesus, Cleopas and his companion ignored the dangers of the return journey and came home to Jerusalem to spread the good news that they had met you and had broken bread with you. Give us both the courage and the tools we need to go into our worlds and speak with love and power about you; help us to do so without being prejudicial or hostile to other worldviews and help us to remember that we are sent to embrace others in the your loving name and arms.

All: **Lord, hear and have mercy.**

Celebrant: So often we forget Holy One, that you invite us to abide in you; to have our lives in tunes with yours. We thank you that you travel with us in all our joys and concerns.

All: **Amen**

We ask you to watch over all our parish family, remembering especially Zachariah, Marjorie, Cheryl, Jeanette, Roy, Emerson, Irene, and their families. May we, by example, draw others towards the glorious Light of the World.

In the Worldwide Anglican Cycle of Prayer, we pray for The Church of Ireland.

In our Diocesan Cycle, we pray for The Church of the Good Shepherd, Barrhaven, and their Priest, The Reverend Margo Whittaker. We pray for St. George's, Clayton, and their Priest, The Reverend Patricia Blythe.

In our Companion Diocese of Jerusalem and The Middle East, we pray for the clergy and people of St. Peter's Church, Birzeit, West Bank.

### Prayer of Confession

Celebrant: Risen Lord, what is it that keeps us from recognizing you?

All: **When we are so full of ourselves, it is all too easy to block you out of our lives.**

**Perhaps it is the way that we hear and interpret your Word that obscures the signs that**

**point to you. Perhaps we are guilty of being slow of heart when we fail to recognize you in the lives of our neighbours or in the guise of the poor or the dispossessed who live in our midst. Our eyes and ears have become so crammed with the sights and sounds of living that we simply fail to see you or hear your voice Risen Lord Jesus, help us to empty ourselves of all that hinders our awareness of your presence with us. Fill us with the joy of knowing your continuing presence, so that like those travellers on the road to Emmaus, we too may hasten to share the good news about you with others. Amen**

(Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies - adapted)

#### Additional Prayers

Celebrant: Meet us Lord on the road to Emmaus. Guide us on the path towards your destination and renew our strength as we continue to walk and commune with you. Open our eyes, that we may see the signs of your presence around us; open our hearts so that we may receive your gifts of love and shalom, and empower us to pass on to others the grace which you have so freely shared with us this day. **Amen**

(Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies)

**All: O great God, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all creation. Help us to become a community that vulnerably shares each others' burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts longings for the healing of our world. Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer this prayer in all the holy names of God. Amen**

(On the road to Emmaus, Richard Rohr)

Celebrant: Go now as witnesses of God's eternal presence. The Risen Lord has made himself known to you in the breaking of the bread. So set your faith and hope on God, fulfilling your vows and living in genuine mutual love. And may God hear you and respond whenever you call; may Christ Jesus make himself known to you and may the Holy Spirit open your eyes and set your hearts on fire with love. **Amen**

#### Dismissal

Celebrant: May the Risen One meet you on the road, lead you into all truth and guide you on your path. May the Risen Christ feed and sustain you and fill you with his presence and equip you with his Spirit. May the Risen Christ go with us today, be with us through this week. May we dwell in Christ and He in us now and forever. **Alleluia!**