

Holy Trinity Anglican Church Metcalfe
Easter 3
April 23, 2023
Reverend Michael Fleming

Fr. Michael: On our journey home, we acknowledge that the places where we live and the sacred space where we gather to meet you on the road lie on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people.

People: **Together, let us walk hand in hand and heart to heart in a spirit of true reconciliation and peace.**

Fr. Michael: Meet us Lord on the road to Emmaus. Guide us on our path towards our destination and renew our strength as we continue to walk and communicate with you. Open our eyes so we may see the signs of your presence around us; open our hearts so that we may receive your gifts of peace and love; and empower us to pass on to others the grace you have shared with us so freely in the name of Jesus. **Amen**

(from The Centre for Mennonite Brothers Studies, 2023)

Fr. Michael: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

People: **and also with you.**

Fr. Michael: Called and gathered for the journey, together we pray, Almighty God,

People: **to you all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom 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**

Fr. Michael: As your friends sang their joy as they entered Jerusalem, so we sing, "Glory to God in the highest,

People: **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.**

Fr. Michael: 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 Jesus in his redeeming work, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. **Amen**

Fr. Michael: Lord Jesus, stay with us we pray in every part of our journey no matter how full of doubt or fear we may be today. Through your Holy Spirit, we pray that you will open our eyes and help us to see you as our Risen Lord in all your beauty and in all your loving power. **Amen.**

Reader: Our first reading is taken from the Book of Acts Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, "Let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified." 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?" 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. 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." And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. (Acts 2: 14, 36-41)

The Word of the Lord

People: **Thanks be to God**

Reader: As you journeyed with the two who travelled on the Emmaus road, travel with us on our journey in faith. In our encounters on the way, give us compassion to hear one another's stories, patience to explain what may seem so obvious to ourselves and the courage to make ourselves vulnerable so that others may encounter you through us and

we may rediscover you through them. **Amen** (from The World Council of Churches 2011)

Reader: Our psalm for this new day is Psalm 116: (v.1-4, 12-19)

I love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of my supplication,

All: **because he has inclined his ear to me whenever I called upon him.**

Reader: The cords of death entangled me; the grip of the grave took hold of me;

All: **I came to grief and sorrow.**

Reader: Then I called upon the name of the Lord:

All: **"O Lord, I pray you, save my life."**

Reader: Gracious is the Lord and righteous;

All: **our God is full of compassion.**

Reader: I will fulfil my vows to the Lord

All: **in the presence of all his people.**

Reader: Precious in the sight of the Lord

All: **is the death of his servants.**

Reader: O Lord, I am your servant;

All: **I am your servant and the child of your handmaid; you have freed me from my bonds.**

Reader: I will offer you the sacrifice of thanksgiving

All: **and call upon the name of the Lord.**

Reader: I will fulfil my vows to the Lord

All: **in the presence of all his people.**

Reader: In the courts of the Lord's house,

All: **in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Hallelujah!**

Reader: A reading from the first letter of Peter to the Church 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. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. 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.

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. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. (1 Peter 1: 17-23)

The Word of the Lord

People: **Thanks be to God**

Reader: Open our eyes Lord, for without the gift of your revelation, our eyes are kept from recognizing you. Appear before us unexpectedly, suddenly, in all your glory so that we may declare to a world of despair that we have seen

the risen Lord. **Amen** (from The Open Sourcebook 2022)

Fr. Michael: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: The Holy Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ according to the Blessed St. Luke (Luke 24:13-36)

People: **Glory be to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. 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?" 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, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over 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 took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 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. 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."

Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 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. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 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?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

This is the very Gospel of Christ.

People: **Praise be to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Homily

ON THE ROAD

I was so tempted to simply repeat my homily from last week, assuming that my words were so forgettable that you wouldn't figure out what I had done until it was over. I was ready to do that until Sharon told me the one I preached a week ago was an OK "just back from holiday" sorta reflection but that I could do much much better now that I am back in the proverbial sermon saddle. Time will tell whether I have reached her lofty evaluation and expectation. .

The gospel for last week as you might remember was the story of Thomas and his encounter with the risen Lord. What I failed to spend any time on when recalling that narrative is that, when we hear his name, we always seem to add a qualifier and thus he is known as Thomas the Doubter. This epithet is not seen as being particularly positive; indeed, it is spoken often with an air of superiority and scorn, leaving the impression that what Thomas felt and did was somehow disloyal to Jesus and that we would never ever do a thing like that – doubt! When I hear his full title, Thomas the Doubter, I remember a time when I was in a church in Toronto helping a family friend get married

and noticed a sign which simply read, “ Welcome to St. Swithin’s in the Swamp – you are not asked nor expected to leave your brains here at the door”. One of the healthiest signs of faith is the willingness to admit that there are times when our faith fails us, when we question some (or indeed all) the statements of our creeds or our clerical leadership. I recall a time when I was the Priest-in-Charge at St. John’s Elgin Street in downtown Ottawa when one of my responsibilities was celebrating a Eucharist every Thursday morning at 7:00 a.m. The service was followed by a light breakfast and there was a goodly congregation of people who would come, share worship and muffins (and of course coffee, coffee, coffee) and then totter off to their jobs. There was one gentleman who intrigued me – when we reached the recitation of the Creed in the liturgy, he would join everyone until we got to a certain point in that faith statement and he would go silent. One morning after service, I asked him about this vocal gap and he explained that there was a part of the creeds that he had real difficulty accepting and that it was better for him to go silent until the particular issue passed and he could rejoin the community in finishing the faith statement. I was somewhat taken aback – not by his decision to not recite something which he found problematic, but that his faith was so precious to him that he did not want to sound like a hypocrite within himself. I assured him that questioning the faith was a really good thing and that we are NOT expected to accept holus bolus what other people tell us is absolute truth.

Jesus himself raised the issue of blind faith when he asked Peter and the others a simple question while on the road to Jerusalem – “Who do people say I am?” When they responded with what others claimed about who Jesus was, our Lord sorta nailed them by asking, “But YOU, who do YOU say I am?” which is the ultimate faith question isn’t it. To me, Thomas was brave and courageous when he admitted that there were moments when he needed some sort of proof or confirmation before he could or would be willing to bet his life that something someone else said was true.

So, the next time you hear of Thomas and want to use the descriptor DOUBTING, perhaps you might say it not with scorn or condemnation, but with a Thanks...

The gospel for this morning I touched on last week – it is the story of two persons who, after the crucifixion decide to go back home. Cleopas and his companion are so shattered by the events at Golgotha that they find themselves in utter confusion – . All they wanted to do in their time of darkness and despair was to go home, home to a time and place before they met Jesus and became involved in his utopian dreams of what could be. And so they set forth for the village of Emmaus. The gospel for today is the story of a journey, a journey which did not end the way they thought it would; a journey which began as an escape but ended as a voyage of discovery.

Cleopas and his companion had had it – all their hopes and dreams had been killed along with their friend Jesus and all was lost. A part of them wondered if they had been victims of the greatest scam ever. Now, all they wanted to do was to get back to a simpler, gentler, kindlier time before Jesus messed with their heads and their hearts; they sought to re-engage with the families they had walked away from when they heard Jesus say, “Come, follow me”. The goal was a simple one for them – they wanted only to go home...but God had a different plan for them!

When we set out on a trip, we usually plot and plan with varying degrees of detailness – in our house, a simple move from Point A to Point B is meticulously charted. We (or in truth Sharon because as you know I am NOT a details person!) list the places we wish to visit, events we have to be at on certain dates (like taking a hot air balloon ride in Myanmar/Burma at dawn) and people we want to connect with in our travels. The planning takes many, many hours and countless visits to guidebooks and the Internet to have some background for every place on our itinerary. By the time

we actually set off, Sharon is exhausted and I, well I tend to me meh! about things until we get where we are going! We also send copies of our itinerary to family so they can reach us in case of emergencies. All this is done with military precision and “the plan” is consulted on a daily basis when we are on the road.

But sometimes the agenda we set in our family room in Barrhaven changes in what St. Paul describes as “the twinkling of an eye” – we miss a plane or we discover we want to stay in one place longer or shorter than we had slotted on our calendar or that the airline has arbitrarily cancelled a flight we needed to take to get to Point C and then the scramble is on! Our plans need to be flexible...

This is sorta what happens to Cleopas and his friend on their journey home. They had it planned out, even if the decision was a relatively sudden one to head for home. It would take a long day of hard walking but they’d be in familiar territory before nightfall. And so they left at sunrise and headed down a familiar road...the road to home and hearth and family. It was a planned escape and what could possibly go wrong?

Well, they meet a stranger on the road and invite him to walk a ways with them. As they place kilometers behind them, they engage the stranger in conversation and don’t realize that the dialogue is so fascinating that the calculated speed of walking deemed necessary to get back to Emmaus before nightfall was slowing and slowing and eventually comes to a full stop on the side of the road. They now realize that “the best laid plans of mice and men” lies shattered and that they will have to alter their itinerary – there’s no way they’ll get home before darkness descends so they decide to stay overnight at a local inn they passed on the trail.

Plan Muckup #1 – they tell the stranger what they plan to do and he tells them that he will just carry on carrying on down the road. Cleopas, remembering that hospitality lies at the core of his life, invites the other to have supper with them at least and the man agrees. As they recline at table and share a simple meal of bread, wine, cheese and olives Plan Muckup #2 kicks in – the stranger takes the bread, breaks it into pieces and offers Cleopas and his friend a share. The guest is now the host, but he does it in such a natural, non-threatening way, that Cleopas does not feel nor resent that his role has been usurped. The stranger takes, prays, breaks and offers and in the doing, Cleopas is taken back to that Seder they shared with Jesus the week before at Passover. In the back of their minds, a spark comes – could it be? - after all, they had been in the room when Mary of Magdala burst in, telling them the impossible story of her meeting Jesus in the cemetery where they had buried him and her declaring, “Jesus is alive and I have spoken with him”. As the stranger pours wine into the simple clay cups, Plan Muckup #3 occurs – as they raise the wine, and look into face of the stranger, they know – THEY KNOW – they know with an absolute certainty who it is who is sitting across from them. They look at one another and raise their eyes to speak the name – JESUS – and the cushion on which he had lain – is empty!!! Where in the name of God had he gone?

Filled with certainty, they make a new plan – against all rationality and concern for their personal safety, they decide to return to Jerusalem that night – to Hades with all the threats that lie on the road

back to the Holy City – what has just happened to them has to be shared with their family – THEIR FAMILY IN JESUS - a new idea of who they and the others in the upper room were – FAMILY. That broken, confused, fearfilled bunch of men, women and children they had deserted a few hours before - they were FRIENDS AND FAMILY! This was what they were looking for – the safety, the

unconditional love, the care and the compassion that a family gives to its members. They wanted to dance in the Jesus spirit and they thought that they would find it in Emmaus...but there it was all that time in Jerusalem and was calling them ...HOMEHome as described by Paul Simon when he wrote "homeward bound, I wish I was homeward bound: where the thoughts are keeping, home where my music's playing, home where my love life 's waiting silently for me."

And so... a story of a journey constantly being interrupted and changed by God. He calls them to the road; he brings Jesus into the mix; He offers them a new way of seeing His PLAN for them and for the world; He invites them to His Table and breaks bread so they might be fed in a new way with the new bread of the Kingdom. Luke does not name Cleopas' companion for a simple reason perhaps – by not naming the other, Luke tells me that I AM THE COMPANION ON THE ROAD and I have been called into the future which is not shaped and planned by me but is in the hands of God and that we are being held in His hands, His hope and His heart. May we all see Jesus in a new way, a new light – in the fellowship of your fellow travellers, in the gathering over simple bread and wine today and always. Alleluia!

Fr. Michael: We turn to our faith for inspiration and hope for the journey. From our ancestors of the faith, we join the faithful of generations as we say, " I believe in one God,

All: the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Reader: Risen One, like the disciples on the 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 we find ourselves in – circumstances sometimes beyond our control, but often of our own making. Open our eyes, Light of the World, to your work of transformation all around us. As we walk with you day by day, may your new life be made manifest in what we say to others. Help us to understand the power of words to hurt or to heal; give us the grace to make all of our conversations holy. In our diocesan cycle of prayer this week, we hold before you Shane, our Bishop; Anne, our Metropolitan; Linda, our Primate; staff at Ascension House, as well as St. Mark the Evangelist, Ottawa and the Reverend Julian Campbell and The Parish of Pakenham and all who minister there. People: **Open our eyes and energize our faith, Lord.**

Reader: Just as we desire that our speaking be holy, may our seeing be holy as well. We are bombarded daily with images, O Christ, with images that shape our attitudes and our behaviours. As you opened the Scriptures to the disciples and taught them everything, open our eyes to behold you in your Word, in the beauty of nature, in the beauty of our sisters and brothers of all faiths and in the beauty of the myriad expressions of you which come to us through music and art and literature. In our seeing, help us to recognize and welcome the stranger who comes seeking our love and healing touch. In our parish prayers this week, think of Louise, Myra, Marjorie, Howard, Irene, Roy, Beth, Jeanette, Sarah, Zachariah, Cheryl, Richard and Deb. May our service be a celebration of the gifts and graces of persons who are different from us and not merely some token tolerance of the outsider in our midst.

People: **Open our eyes and energize our faith, Lord.**

Reader: You were made known to the disciples in the breaking of bread. May your resurrection presence guide us in the decisions we make about the shape of our ministries to the sick, the lonely and the lost, the unloved, the poor, the distressed, the silenced voices who look to us for ears that are open to your cries for justice and peace.

People: **open our eyes and energize our faith, Lord.**

Reader: So often we forget Holy One, that you invite us to abide with you, to have our lives hidden in you and we thank you that you travel with us in all our joys, sorrows and concerns. **Amen.**

(from The Centre for Mennonite Brothers Studies 2023, adapted by RMF)

Fr. Michael: Risen Lord Jesus, what is it that keeps us from recognizing you?

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

Fr. Michael: Maybe it's the way we interpret Scriptures that obscures all the signs which point to you.

People: **Perhaps we are guilty of being slow of heart when we don't recognize you in our neighbour or in the guise of the poor or the dispossessed.**

Fr. Michael: Our eyes, our ears, our hearts have become so crammed with the sights and sounds of living that we simply fail to see you or to recognize your voice in all the confusion.

People: **Risen Lord, help us to empty ourselves of all that hinders our awareness of your living presence among us. Fill us with the joy of knowing your continuing presence so that, like those who travelled to Emmaus, we too may hasten to share this great good news with others.**

Fr. Michael: May the God of peace fill our hearts; may the God of joy teach us to dance; may the God of hope lighten our vision and may God, Father, Son and Spirit be with us all now and for evermore. May the peace of the Lord be always among us.

People: **Alleluia and Alleluia!**

WE SHARE THE SHALOM OF CHRIST WITH ONE ANOTHER

Fr. Michael: Creator of all, you wash away our sins in water, you give us new birth by the Spirit and redeem us by the blood of Christ. As we celebrate the resurrection, renew your gift of life within us and we ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Risen Lord.

All: **Amen**

Fr. Michael: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them to the Lord.**

Fr. Michael: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Fr. Michael: We give you thanks and praise, Almighty God, through your beloved Son, Jesus the Christ, our Saviour and our Redeemer. He is your Living Word through whom you have created all things. By the power of the Holy Spirit, he took flesh of the Virgin Mary and shared our human nature. He lived and died as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all. In fulfillment of your will, he stretched out his hands in suffering to bring release to those who place their hope in you and so he won for you a holy people. He chose to bear our griefs and sorrows and to give up his life on the cross, that he might shatter the chains of evil and death and banish the darkness of sin and despair. By his resurrection, he brings us into the light of your presence. Now, with all your creation, we raise our voices to proclaim the glory of your name,

All: **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Fr. Michael: Holy and gracious God, accept our praise through your Son, our Saviour Jesus, who on the night he was handed over the suffering and death took bread and gave you thanks saying, "Take and eat; this is my body which is broken and given for you." In the same way, he took the cup of wine saying, "This is my blood which is shed for you. When you do this, you do this in memory of me." Remembering therefore his death and resurrection we offer you this bread and this wine, giving thanks that you have made us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you. We ask you to send your Holy Spirit on the offering of your Holy Church. Gather into one all who share in these sacred mysteries, filling them with the Holy Spirit and confirming their faith in the truth, that together we may praise you and give you glory through your Servant, Jesus Christ. All glory and honour are yours, Father and Son with the Holy Spirit, in the Holy Church now and for ever. **Amen.**

Fr. Michael: And now, as Jesus has gifted to his Church, so we pray,

People: **Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Fr. Michael: Lord, we died with you on the cross;

People: **now we are raised to new life.**

Fr. Michael: We were buried in your tomb;

People: **now we share in your resurrection. Live in us so that we may live in you.**

Fr. Michael: The gifts of God for all the children of God

People: **Thanks Be To God**

WE SHARE THE GIFTS OF HOPE AND LIFE WITH ONE ANOTHER

Fr. Michael: Author of life divine, in the breaking of the bread we know the Risen Lord. Feed us always in these mysteries so that we may show your glory in all the world and we ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. **Amen**

Fr. Michael: Where shattered hearts are made whole, where wounded souls are healed, where life is stronger than death:

People: **there, the stone has been rolled away.**

Fr. Michael: Where the lonely become our friends, where the stranger is welcomed home, where hope is stronger than despair:

People: **there, we find Jesus walking.**

Fr. Michael: Where closed wallets are opened, where the anxious find serenity, where love is stronger than hate:

People: **there, Jesus is opening our eyes.**

Fr. Michael: The stone has been rolled away! Jesus is our companion on the journey! Our eyes and ears are opened to the needs of others.

People: **Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Alleluia! Christ is with us !**

(by Thom Shuman re:Worship 2020))

Fr. Michael: Go now as witnesses to God's eternal presence. The Risen Christ has made himself known to us 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 and respond whenever and however you call; may

Christ make himself known to you in all things and may the Spirit open our eyes and set our hearts on fire with Love. (from Laughing Bird Liturgical Resources 2021)

Worship follows the Holy Eucharist in the Book of Alternative Services.

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