
“ STAY WITH US, LORD ”



Lent of 2005 is coming to an end. Level Three of the family- and parish -based catechetics programme will have been our mentor throughout. “Remain in my love!” was the invitation made to us. We saw how God wanted to make the earth our home, and how He has always wanted to be with us. “Emmanuel,” “God-with-us” became man and dwelt among us. He abides in us so that we can go and bear fruit in abundance.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Three days after Jesus’ death on a cross in Jerusalem, two disciples were travelling together to the village of Emmaus. The men were discouraged; they had followed the Master, “a prophet powerful in word and deed in the eyes of God and all the people.” Jesus himself approached them and joined them on the road; however, they were restrained from recognising him. He asked them what it was that they were discussing, while walking along. They halted, in distress, and told him about all that had been happening. “We were hoping that he was the one who would set Israel free.” Jesus said to them: “Did not the Messiah have to undergo all this so as to enter into his glory?” Beginning, then, with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted for them every passage of Scripture which referred to him. When they reached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going further. But they pressed him: “Stay with us. It is nearly evening – the day is practically over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he had seated himself with them to eat, he took bread, pronounced the blessing, then broke the bread and began to distribute it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognised him, whereupon he vanished from their sight. They said to one another: “Were not our hearts burning inside us as he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?” They got up immediately and returned to Jerusalem, where they found the Eleven and the rest of the company assembled. Then they recounted what had happened and how they had come to know him in the breaking of bread.

UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS

We can easily imagine these disciples’ intense joy, one that gave them wings, so to say. They went from the despair of their Master’s death to the certainty of his resurrection. Their hearts were burned by his presence, his kindness, and his sharing. It isn’t because they feared the night that the disciples invited the stranger to “Stay with us.” It is only that they had just experienced moments the likes of which they had not had before, time when a stranger took the initiative to walk with them and show concern for their worry and pain, explain the Scriptures to them, and share the meal, that was quite unheard-of. If a simple “passage” of Jesus in someone’s life can have effects that are as extraordinary, what marvellous blessings can his constant presence bring? “Remain in my love,” Jesus says to us. ‘If someone loves me he will keep my word, my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him.’ The disciples of Emmaus were unable to keep their good fortune to themselves. They got up immediately and returned to Jerusalem to tell the others of their encounter with the Risen Christ.

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS

Throughout our Lent 2005 reflections, I shared with you some very good news, but there really was nothing new, there. However, your heart was perhaps better disposed to welcome this news and to share it with your children and your friends. When we realise that this grand old world is ours and was given to us as a gift by God, this changes the perception we have of our environment. Along with God, we see that the world is good! When we take the time to consider that every man and woman and child is created in the image and likeness of God, this changes our attitude towards human beings, and we see that this is very good. When we take the time to consider God’s infinite desire to be with us and in us, our vision of God is filled with awe and

gratitude. When we become aware in faith that Jesus shared our human condition and that he continues to give himself to us especially in the sacraments of forgiveness and Eucharist, our hearts burn within us and, like the disciples at Emmaus, we carry this Good News to the others.

WONDERFUL DIRECTIVE

Just before leaving the world at his Ascension, Jesus said to his friends: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you; then you are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, yes, even to the ends of the earth." Like the disciples who returned to Jerusalem with the Good News, we, too, who have just journeyed through Level Three of the catechetics programme, must tell our close ones and our friends about the wonderful things that have been happening to us, when we met together and joined in reflection. The Holy Spirit shall guide us on our way. The Risen One is already preceding us. In us and through us he continues to proclaim the Good News. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners, to announce a year of favour from the Lord."

"I WALK WITH YOU"

Since Jesus walked with the disciples of Emmaus, and he wants to continue the journey with us, may we, in our hearts, have the same desire to walk with him. The words of Robert Lebel's beautiful song can sustain this desire in us: "This means that I know how much you love me and how much I am worth to you, since the day I was baptised, you have been a truly wonderful friend. This means that I want to learn to live like you, by loving much, and by walking the journey with a more liberated heart. This means that you call me to struggle for a more beautiful world, a world with a new power, and invaded by a new spirit. This means that, certain of your promise, I want to walk with you, because I know that despite my weakness, you, O Lord, count on me. This means that beyond borders and colours, languages, and thoughts, I want to spread the light and sing about the Spirit of freedom. It means that I want to serve others, whether great or small, but most of all I want to be close to the poor who hunger and who have no friend."

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