



# Sunday Reflection

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter



in the Charges of St Margaret, Renfrew  
& St John, Johnstone

For Sunday 26 April 2020

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter

while all Church worship in the buildings is suspended

On this third Sunday of the Easter season, we continue to celebrate the miracle of the resurrection. Dying for us, Jesus restores us to life.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!



### Reflection for this week's Gospel

**“While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognising him.”** Luke 24:15-16

#### **An Illustration to set the scene**

Followers of international football may know that a particular song is forever associated with Liverpool FC. Soccer fans from around the world visiting Anfield Stadium will see the title above

the iconic Shankly Gates. And wherever the team is playing, the stands will be alive with voices singing, "You'll never walk alone."

Originally taken from the musical *Carousel*, the song's association with the club began when a version by local Liverpool band Gerry and the Pacemakers reached number one in the UK singles chart in 1963. In the musical, the words give comfort after a tragedy. For Liverpool FC they have done the same in the years following the Hillsborough disaster in 1989, when almost a hundred Liverpool fans were crushed to death at Sheffield Wednesday's Hillsborough Stadium. The song accompanied each step in the long battle for justice for bereaved relatives and the hundreds of injured and traumatised survivors. And indeed they were not alone, because strangers – politicians, celebrities and countless "ordinary" people – rallied round to support them in their grief.

### **Looking at the words of the Gospels**

Tragedy has struck in today's Gospel. Two of the wider group of disciples are walking towards Emmaus, fleeing Jerusalem and the apparent loss of someone they loved. They are "talking and discussing", going over the dreadful events of the previous days. All their hopes had been fixed on Jesus, but his arrest was quickly followed by his brutal crucifixion. Now there are strange stories that the women disciples have found his tomb empty. Has someone even stolen his body? Could it get any worse?

Heartbroken, they struggle to make sense of it, partly because they are both suffering the same sense of bereavement. But, as they walk, they discover that they are not alone. A stranger begins to walk alongside them. With careful questions, he encourages them to share their heartbreak. And when they do eventually recognise him, he gives them hope in their hearts. In this way, the disciples learn that through the miracle of Easter they will never be alone again.

It's easy to focus on that later part of today's Gospel story, when Jesus is recognised in the breaking of the bread. That's important, of course, with echoes of the Eucharist, the Communion service. But the earlier part is also important. Those two disciples might have simply walked on. When Jesus asks what troubled them, they might have said, "Oh, nothing. It doesn't matter." Or even, "Mind your own business!"

If so, they might never have heard him opening the scriptures to them, let alone have recognised Jesus in the breaking of the bread, and discovered that he had risen from the dead for them, and for us. Simply by sharing their grief with this stranger, they opened a conversation that helped to heal them.

### **How can we reflect on the application to our lives**

The Emmaus story illustrates many ways we can recognise Jesus today. We can recognise him in prayer, which isn't simply talking to God, but listening. We can recognise him in Bible study, which isn't simply opening the scriptures, but studying them. And, yes, we can recognise him in the breaking of the bread – but not only in the Eucharist. By sharing any meal with someone who needs companionship, we might perhaps learn to recognise the risen Jesus in that person.

Because, if we truly want to be disciples of Jesus, to follow his example in our daily lives, today's Gospel has an important message. We can walk with people who suffer, as Jesus did. We can try listening, being there for them, whether a friend or a stranger. Admittedly, we're sometimes embarrassed, not knowing what to say when someone's bereaved, worried or frightened. But Jesus began by simply listening. If we do likewise, we may find that we're not simply helping others, but helping ourselves to understand what discipleship really means.

And if we ourselves are grieving, or anxious, or depressed, let's not be afraid to share our troubles – with a friend, or even a sympathetic stranger. But especially with Jesus, as those two disciples did. He wants to help. To paraphrase that famous song, "Walk on, walk on, with Christ in your heart ... and you'll never walk alone".

**"While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognising him."** Luke 24:15-16

Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God's spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**