

Easter 3A

I like the story of little orphan Joe. Joe went to be examined by the orphanage doctor. When he came back the nun asked, 'What did he say to you, Joe?' Joe answered, 'He said to me, "What a miserable little specimen you are". And then Joe added, 'But, Sister, I don't think he knew I had made my first Communion'.

You will notice from the Scriptures that a lot of the sightings of the risen Jesus occurred in the context of a meal and today's Gospel is no exception. There is a clear reference to the Eucharist here. Last Sunday Jesus said to Thomas: "happy are those who have not seen and yet believe". Well, at Mass we don't see Jesus in the flesh but we believe that He is present with us under the appearance of Bread and wine and he speaks to us through the readings.

You often hear people say: "I believe in God but I don't believe in the Church". Well, without the Church there is no Mass. It is primarily through the Mass that we draw close to Our Lord. Jesus would have remained more or less a stranger to the Emmaus disciples if they hadn't invited Him in to dine with them that evening. After all 'He made as if to go on' but like Mrs Doyle, they wouldn't take no for an answer. If we bypass the Mass our nearness to the Risen Lord cannot be presumed.

Another important aspect of the gospel today is when Jesus explained the scriptures to the two disciples. That surely refers to the first part of the Mass when we spend time listening to God's word. They said: "did not our hearts burn within us when he talked to us". Do we ever feel the Lord is speaking to us personally through the readings or homily? Our souls are nourished no less on the Word of God as on Bread of Life in Holy Communion.

The meaning of the word 'mass' is derived from the Latin word '*missa*' which means 'dismissal'. Like the Emmaus disciples we are send out from the Mass like men and women on a mission. The two disciples, full of joy after seeing Jesus, set out immediately to tell others what had happened to them on the road and how they had recognised Him at the breaking of bread. We too should be full of God-like enthusiasm and not keep our faith 'under wraps'.

The body of Jesus was broken on the cross out of love for us. Bread cannot be eaten for nourishment until it is first broken into chewable morsels. As bread is broken in the Eucharist, our task in this world is that we allow our lives to be broken in the service of our brothers and sisters. That's putting our faith into action.

Like Thomas last week, the two Emmaus disciples were downcast but through their encounter with the Risen Lord they no longer feel dejected. The Mass will build up our faith as well and make us fit for service.