

3rd Sunday of Eastertide (A)

19th April 2026

'Invite Jesus into your home, invite Him to walk with you!'

Acts 2: "You killed Him, but God raised Him to life."

Ps 15: You will not

leave my soul amongst the dead. 1Pt 1: Through Him you now have faith in God,

who raised Him from the dead. Lk 24: 13–35: the road to Emmaus

Walking in the countryside has always been a part of my life, and any holiday, for me, should include walks in the natural landscape. This isn't really a surprise: my Mum & Dad met, in the 60s, in a Catholic walking club based in London, and so did both my uncles and their wives — in the *same* walking group! — so we grew up as a family with country walking, esp. on Sunday afternoons, being a normal part of family life. On Easter Tuesday I was out walking with my Dad, as it's the season for bluebells, and we know some particularly fine bluebell woods near us! And just after that I and some students from here, organised by the FCJ Sisters, did a few days' walking retreat across Northumberland to the ancient Holy Island of Lindisfarne, home to 7th-c. monks of the Celtic tradition, SS Aidan, Cuthbert, & others.

6yrs ago, when we all had to go into lockdown during CoVID, I was able to exercise this happy activity of

country walking more than I'd ever had time to, before, in my life as a parish priest; I discovered so much of that part of Hertfordshire and its wonderful array of footpaths. Those early days of the pandemic saw not a cloud in the sky, instead the brilliant signs of nature bursting with life: the bright greens of hillsides and budding trees in bright sunshine; carpets of countless thousands of bluebells, and later the May bushes, in various woods and coppices; and so many butterflies everywhere. Those things had always been there, but the chance to be out, alone, and in nice weather, brought them so much to the fore: I really noticed all that life springing forth in Eastertime / springtime.

The 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus, in that famous passage (Lk 24) in the Gospel today, were on a country walk, away from Jerusalem, but they certainly weren't looking properly at what was around them; they weren't ready to see signs of new life. "*They stood still, looking sad,*" we are told. They were despondent, taken up with their anxieties, not having eyes open to see what was happening around them. How might we imagine their

thinking, as they trudge along the road, downcast? — isolated from their community, upset by the sudden tragedy of death, thinking that ‘everything has collapsed,’ not knowing what will happen next, just heading home and going to stay in, unsure when to risk coming out again. Maybe we sometimes get into a pattern of thinking that is a bit the same — despondent about something that has happened, or with irritation at the way the world is ...

Into this situation, for sure, Jesus comes. As surely as He did on the road to Emmaus for Cleopas and his companion, *Jesus always comes and walks alongside us*. We must not doubt it! We must not have our eyes closed as those disciples did! — *we must have our eyes opened* to Jesus who comes and walks with us, reassuring us and explaining to us, in His own divine logic, what has happened, and what will happen. There are three key features of the Lord’s approach to those disheartened disciples: (i) the **Scriptures**; (ii) the **invitation to stay** with them; and (iii) the **Eucharist**. These are three ways in which we can most certainly know that the Lord Jesus

walks with us, speaks to us, and strengthens us with a sight that is clear and not downcast.

(i) First, then, **open your hearts to the Scriptures**. In this present Easter time what better to ponder than the richness of the bible texts, especially those that give us the *Good News of the Resurrection*. Think how Jesus so often used Scripture to explain His message, and how the apostles and their early collaborators committed Jesus’s powerful words and saving deeds to a remembered oral form, and then to writing. Read the Scriptures, then, in whatever way is best for you, even just a few verses of the Gospel a day. A suggestion I’d strongly make, in this season, is to read the *Acts of the Apostles*. Have you ever read *Acts*, cover to cover? It’s very straightforward reading, and is a unique book of the NT; full of really strong encouragement as the apostles draw strength from Jesus whom they know walks with them. “*Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures?*” Jesus can truly speak to us, personally, calmly, as we read the sacred Word.

(ii) Second, **invite Jesus into your home!** (“Stay with us, Lord!”) Like the disciples at Emmaus, make sure you have brought Jesus into your home, into your room. Would someone walking into your student room now, know that you are a Christian, a Catholic? *Make sure you are bringing Jesus into your home*, making it a holy place ... through placing a crucifix prominently at the heart of your room, maybe an image also of Our Lady or another saint; making your room a holy place. It’s important for us to believe that the Lord dwells with us through the Spirit He has given us, so: not side-lining Him but making Him at home in your home, a welcome guest, a beloved friend.

(iii) Third, then, the **Holy Eucharist**. The culmination of Jesus’s time with the Emmaus disciples was His revelation to them at *the offering of the Eucharist*. This summer term, which may be devoid of some other activities, and amidst the stresses of exam season, continue to make the Eucharist, that privileged encounter with Jesus Christ, a priority. Always on Sunday, of course, but also if possible on some weekdays, unite yourself intimately with Jesus in

the Holy Eucharist, His loving and living presence. Weekday 5.30pm Mass continues right through, and could be the very oasis of peace that you need in these weeks ahead of study and revision. *Jesus never leaves us*, though invisible. He is always here by our side, and He is most precious and intimately with us at Mass. Let’s receive His gifts, His grace, His presence, as He offers them, especially in times when we might feel challenged, or even prone to being downcast. He raises our eyes to Him, and our minds and hearts, to see that He *is* truly with us.

I want to offer a final dimension of this Emmaus event for you, and that’s not so much about inviting Jesus to walk closely with you, but to remind you that you are called to walk closely with others and introduce them to Jesus. I remember a long time ago, when I was a student — at Worth Abbey on a retreat or a reunion — taking part in an ‘Emmaus Walk.’ This was an exercise of prayer, where the whole group began together, maybe hearing this very Gospel of Lk 24, and then, in randomly selected pairs went out from the prayer group for a walk, perhaps for an

hour, the first half of it in talking and sharing, and the second part of it in prayerful silence. I remember whom I walked with — her name was Nicky, someone I knew, but not well; she was a dentistry student. The idea was that by walking out with this person, not as a social encounter, but a prayerful one, you could share how you each saw Jesus walking with you through life, and could experience and encourage each other in that walk; then in the silent half you could hold each other in prayer as you allowed Jesus Himself to walk with you and do the communicating.

I describe this because I think it's an image of what we as practising Catholics should be modelling day to day with those around us. We are not walking (socializing, studying) alongside others in a meaningless random way, but *in a way that is really an Emmaus Walk*. In other words, we can and should be thinking of those we live our lives with as *walking with Jesus as well as with us*. And if the other has no knowledge of Our Lord, then to introduce him or her to Jesus. This can naturally come about if we are using those very same sacred instruments that Our Lord

used on the Road to Emmaus: (i) the regular use of the Scriptures; (ii) the elements of your dwelling that announce that Jesus dwells there too; and (iii) most especially the Holy Eucharist. There is space here in the chapel, as you can see: there's space for your friend! You can walk them here! I mean, I know you can't frog-march them here against their will, but some who are close to you might very much wish to walk here with you, and to experience the Lord. You never know how the Lord will touch their hearts simply through the mystery of the Mass; the Lord is powerful in His sacramental presence, and can very suddenly & lovingly call a heart to love Him.

So, alongside the other pressing duties of this term, think about that: it's your responsibility and possibility, to bring others here, to meet Our Lord; to walk with Him, and with them, to allow them to meet. As you invite them, so He also will strengthen you, and give your faith a fresh focus: "*did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road ... opened the Scriptures to us? ... And their eyes were opened at the Breaking of the Bread.*"