

Gospel text

Luke 24: 13-35

13 Now, this same day of Easter, two of Jesus' disciples were on their way to a village about 8 miles away from Jerusalem called Emmaus. 14 They talked among themselves about all these events that had occurred. 15 While they were conversing and discussing this, Jesus himself approached them and began to walk with them, 16 but their eyes were unable to recognize him. 17 He said to them, "What were you saying to one another while walking? They stopped then, all sad. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "You are the only foreigner living in Jerusalem to ignore what has happened these days in this city". "But what!" Asked Jesus. They answered him, "All things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who has shown himself to be an influential prophet both by his actions and by his words to God and to all the people, 20 as well as the manner in which he was handed over to the high priests and to our authorities to receive his sentence of death and he was crucified. Yet we were hopeful that he would liberate Israel. But we are already on the third day since these things happened. 22 It is true that some women in our group of disciples amazed us. When they had gone to the tomb early in the morning and had not found his body, they went to announce that they had heard a message from God that he is alive. 24 Then some of us went to the tomb and found things exactly as the women had described them, but without seeing him". 25 Then Jesus said to them, "O people whose heart is without understanding, and slow to believe all that the prophets spoke about. 26 Was it not necessary that the messiah endures all these things so that the quality of being extraordinary of his person is revealed?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he began to explain to them how all the scriptures spoke of him.

28 When they arrived at the village where they were going, Jesus pretended to go further. 29 But the disciples strongly urged him saying, "Stay with us, it is evening and the day is nearly over". Then Jesus went into the house to dwell with them. 30 And when Jesus sat down with them, he said the blessing after taking the bread, and broke it, and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him. But he immediately became invisible to them. 32 The disciples said to one another, "Was not our heart kindled when He spoke to us on the way and opened us to the understanding of the Scriptures?" 33 And immediately standing up, they returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together with the people who were with them, 34 who said to them, "The Lord is risen, and Simon has experienced it." 35 And they began to tell what had happened on the road, and how he had revealed himself to them in the breaking of bread.

Gospel commentary - Homily

Understanding and feeling supported

How many times in our lives have we been disappointed? Small disappointments, first. Disappointment of the result of an examination. Disappointment of not having been recognized for all the effort provided in a project. Disappointment with a promotion that did not come? Disappointment of a financial situation? Disappointment of a child who does not meet our expectations. Disappointment at the political level? You should have seen the faces of some after the 2004 US election. But there are also great disappointments. Disappointments at the failure of a marriage. Disappointment of not finding a spouse. Disappointment before a choice of life that does not make us happy. Disappointment in front of a body that causes us too much trouble. Disappointment to a part of our life that we would have wanted it never exists. This is what people say who have suffered from their family background, their education, or the nonsense they have done. Anyway, disappointments with many faces are part of our lives. Yet, if it were only for us, we would build a world where disappointments would never exist. So why did God build a world where disappointment is part of our daily bread?

Without knowing the answer to this question, I think it is the context in which we must listen to the story of the disciples of Emmaus presented in this Sunday's liturgy. Indeed, these two men Luke speaks about are disappointed people. This is not a small disappointment, like that of having screwed the soup. When we hope for a political liberator, our whole life is committed. Luke mentions that they look at Jesus with a "dark" look when he questions them: the word "depression" would be more appropriate to describe what they are living. For what is left to people when they take away what is the mainspring of their lives? We can identify in different ways with these two men. So in such a context, what did Jesus tell them?

The first thing that seems to me fundamental is the fact that Jesus is present when they talk together and try to understand what happened in Jerusalem. One of the terms of the original Greek text to describe what they do is *homilein*, which gave our "homily" word: they give each other a homily. The very fact that people come together to seek to understand, to shed light on their lives, to discover the truth, is the clear sign that Jesus is present. What does it mean? You are going through a deep disappointment? Do not run away! Do not bury it in alcohol, gambling, pornography or drugs. Do not deny your disappointment. Cry, scream, and question yourself. With others, yes, especially with others, let your misunderstandings go up, keep looking for the light. It seems to me that believing in the presence of the very person of Jesus at the heart of my questioning gives a mystical dimension to what seems painful to me.

In Luke's account, Jesus rebukes the two men for their lack of intelligence and lack of faith in concluding: was it not fitting for the messiah to endure all these things so that the quality of extraordinary being of his person might be revealed? Do we have here an explanation of suffering, his, ours? Not at all! But the happy ending of this painful journey makes it possible to give it a meaning, a direction. Also, to believe that at the end of my various wounds is a spring that I can not imagine, does not answer all my questions, but allows me to continue walking and, in a way, to understand.

The story ends with a meal in a cottage, after dark. Why is it then that the two disciples recognize Jesus? Do not tell me because they made the connection with the words used for the "act of consecration" at the mass. Rather, the gesture of sharing bread is

the very symbol of fraternity. It is not enough to make sense of all our disappointments, we must also feel supported. The "I understand" must be accompanied by "I love you".

If you are insightful, you have noticed that Luke's story resembles Sunday mass, first with the liturgy of the word and the homily, followed by the Eucharist proper with the sharing of bread. One can imagine that the Eucharistic liturgy structure inspired Luke in the way of telling the story of the disciples of Emmaus. It is to say how much this celebration reflects life, where we seek to understand its mystery, and with the help of the eyes of faith and support from brothers and sisters, we can see the life offered by Jesus in the midst of our disappointments, which brings us closer to one another, to support one another, and thereby to become "the body of Christ".

-André Gilbert, Gatineau, December 2004