

UT INTELLIGERENT SCRIPTURAS

A Homily for the Third Sunday of Easter (B)

St Paul's Parish, Gävle, Sweden.

Texts: Acts 3: 13-15, 17-19; Ps. 4; 1 John 2: 1-5a; Luke 24: 35-48.

“He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures”. My dear brothers and sisters, the readings of today tell us of the continuation of the glorious events of the Resurrection of our Lord, which we are celebrating during this holy season of Easter. The Gospel teaches us in a very important way about the transformation that took place in the lives of the disciples of the Lord.

Last week we read about how two of the disciples encountered the Risen Lord and how they recognized him at the breaking of the bread. Today, we read about how the Lord appeared again to the disciples. While the two disciples who have hurried back from Emmaus to tell others their experience with the Risen Lord are still talking, the Lord himself comes in! He reassures them that he is the one. He shows them his hands and his feet. He eats the piece of fish they offer him. He teaches them - or rather – reminds them of what he has taught them before his death – that in him all that the Old Testament Scripture teaches is fulfilled. After this, he opens their minds to understand the Scriptures. The mystery opened before us is exactly what we celebrate every time in the Holy Eucharist. For in the Eucharist we celebrate the Christ who is present in the members of his Body gathered in worship, in the Scriptures, in the person of the presiding priest and in the Eucharist. We see here the Risen Christ who opened the eyes of the two disciples at Emmaus at the “breaking of bread” is present among them as he speaks and teaches them that he is the Scripture – the Word of God. Hugh of St Victor has an important insight. Here is what he tells us, **“All sacred Scripture is but one book, and this one book is Christ, "because all divine Scripture speaks of Christ, and all divine Scripture is fulfilled in Christ" (CCC 134).** You wonder why the disciples were so slow to understand the Scriptures? It was because they had not yet received the Spirit of the Risen Lord. But we see that as soon as they received the Spirit of the Risen Christ, as soon as the Lord opened their eyes to understand the Scriptures, their lives changed. We see this in the First Reading. We read it in the Second as well. We hear Peter, speaking on behalf of other Apostles, about the mystery of Christ foretold in the Old Testament. He excuses the people who caused the killing of the Christ, saying that they acted in ignorance: the people and their leaders did know that by killing the Christ they were helping to fulfill what the Scriptures had foretold about him. St Thomas Aquinas also had a similar insight and tells us: **“The phrase "heart of Christ" can refer to Sacred Scripture, which makes known his heart, closed before the Passion, as the Scripture was obscure. But the Scripture has been opened since the Passion; since those who from then on have understood it, consider and discern in what way the prophecies must be interpreted. (CCC 112).**

Dear brothers and sisters, this means that to know Christ, we have to know the Scriptures, for as St Jerome teaches us, **“Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ”**. All the arguments that go on in this country and in many parts of the world are as a result of the ignorance of Christ, occasioned by the ignorance of Sacred Scriptures. What I have just said is what the Lord told the Jews often when they disputed with him. People write all kinds of things, speak all kinds of calumny against the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, simply because they do not care for the Scriptures and therefore do not know Christ, whose vicar the Pope is. These people are wrong when they regard the Pope as a mere

political leader, who must speak in ways that are politically correct, or as a leader of a church of their own making, a human organization that is devoid of the inspiration and lead of the Holy Spirit. I am happy when people of this world disagree with the Holy Father because it a confirmation of the fact that he truly following the footsteps of Christ, the sign of contradiction, the Light that drives darkness away. As always, people who prefer the darkness of falsehood to the light of truth will be angry with the Pope, the successor of St Peter. In this Holy Catholic Church, the Risen Christ gives us his own Spirit, just as he gave the same Spirit to the Apostles. We are members of that Church of “the Word” that is Christ who died and rose from the dead in accordance with the Scriptures. We live according to the teaching of Christ faithfully taught by the Apostles and handed over to their successors unto this day. We are commanded by the Lord to be faithful to this Tradition. This is not the result of clever human construction. It is the fruit of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Risen Christ. And as Origen says, **“What comes from the Spirit is not fully understood except by the Spirit’s action”**.

The Risen Christ is the Saviour of the world, the true Lamb of God who offered himself in sacrifice for our eternal redemption. It is for this reason that we should keep his commandment of love. We do not understand the Scriptures if we do not live according to the Scriptures.

“Lord Jesus, explain the scriptures to us.
Make our hearts burn within us as you talk to us”

Fr Damian O. Eze, MSP
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