

Explain it to me again and again.

The story of Easter never loses its power. No matter how many times we re-read it or we re-tell it, it retains its amazing capacity to enthrall. Today's telling of the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is perhaps the most captivating of all the resurrection narratives. It is a beautifully crafted piece of story telling which never for a moment goes off-piste or deviates from its truth. As a result it can be told and retold time after time and still apply its meaning to each and every aspect of our own experience of coming to faith and belief in the resurrection. We can analyze the story and the characters in it and see in them mirror images of our own selves.

The atmosphere of the story is at first fraught; the two men are arguing with each other. Their hopes and expectations have been dashed and completely destroyed and in their despair they ridicule the stranger who comes alongside them. What they recount is indeed the Good News but told in such a way as to disparage those who might hold such a belief. How akin to our own times as our re-telling of the story sometimes becomes infused with doubt and mocking scorn. Yet this stranger will have none of it. It is as if he is saying don't allow your skepticism to brush aside the beauty and the love which you felt for this person. Don't allow your cynicism to trample the joy which he brought into your lives. Yes we suffer from setbacks and hardships; yes our lives will encounter trauma and pain but do not lose faith. The God of love who has breathed his spirit into you is a God of life who will never desert you even in your darkest of moments. And as the darkness at the end of the day begins to surround them they feel his departure more than ever. Stay with us, don't go.

And so to a room where bread is broken and shared. Where thoughts and feelings mingle and interact, where memory and reality hold hands and sacrament is made present. That night in the Upper Room; was it really only just seventy two hours ago or is it a lifetime away? They were there and we are here, but the sacramental presence is the same. This is my body broken for you, past made present, love is come again. Do we see it? Are our eyes opened? We are to make this story our story, where our sorrows and crumpled lives are set against the backdrop of a journey away from all that we hoped for and anticipated. In the midst of this retreat we encounter his presence, not immediately recognizable and not immediately tangible but nevertheless there, probing and questioning until ultimately a revelation is experienced through an exchange that provokes a turning around to hope from despair, to love from disaster, to faith from disconnection.

Our lives are explained through and in his life and we are given the reality of his life to make our own. We receive it in the bread we break and in the story we tell and in the people who live it out in all its sorrow and pathos. We have to tell this story again and again to make sense of it because it happened in truth and time. The road to Emmaus is walked every day and the one who walks alongside us listens to our tales and tells us to place them within his story where they become consecrated and made holy, changed and transformed, uplifted and risen to make our hearts burn within us.