

Bulletin 7 – The Third Sunday of Easter

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Well, this lockdown has to go on and we have to be persistent and resilient and keep up the effort that we're making in order to protect each other – protect other people.

But there's a big thank you we want to give to all those who are caring for others. It's especially true in our care homes, in our hospitals, but it's true in every place where somebody is genuinely caring for another person. And in these circumstances, it's stressful, but it's deeply appreciated.

And we can see on a Thursday evening how much that caring work, especially in the NHS and in care homes, is appreciated. Now, what we want to do, is add to that public applause, the practice of public prayer. So every Thursday at 7 o'clock, a bishop will celebrate Mass in one of the cathedrals for the care workers – so please do join in, if you can, on the live streaming. Follow where the Mass takes place on each different Thursday.

And even more importantly, use that time before 8 o'clock on a Thursday to offer your prayers of thanksgiving for these generous, courageous people, for their support – their encouragement – that God will sustain them in this great work that they're doing.

We applaud, but we pray and we pray fervently for them. May God bless them all.

Streamed Live Catholic Masses for the Sick and their Families, NHS Front-Line workers and those working in Social Care

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK

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| Sunday 26 th | – Third Sunday of Easter | – for the People of our Parish |
| Monday 27 th | – feria of Easter Time | – Brian Davis (RIP) |
| Tuesday 28 | – feria of Easter Time | – Frank Skuse (RIP) |
| Wednesday 29 th | – St Catherine of Siena | – John Hogan (RIP) |
| Thursday 30 th | – feria of Easter Time | – Vic Potter (Anno) |
| Friday 1 st May | – St. Joseph the Worker | – Benedict, Pope Emeritus |
| Saturday 2 nd May | – St. Athanasius | – Sandy Gibb (RIP) |
| Sunday 3 rd May | – Fourth Sunday of Easter | – for the People of our Parish |

I am most grateful to Deacon Michael for supplying this week's reflection on the Gospel for this Sunday, thus giving my little grey cells a rest, but more importantly giving you the chance to have a break from my musings.

With my Love and Prayers for you all,

Fr. John.

For those who would like to speak with me on any matter:- 01279 429388

Or email on john.corbyn@btinternet.com

In the past before people had books let alone the internet scripture was revealed by what we call the tradition – spoken word – and this was complimented by paintings many of which the church felt would bring a realistic understanding of the message more easily to the faithful therefore over the course of time we have countless illustrations of the Gospel stories.

This week's Gospel focuses on the apparition of the risen Lord at Emmaus and one painting in particular the 'Supper at Emmaus' by Caravaggio depicting the moment when the resurrected but incognito Jesus reveals himself to two of his disciples - presumed to be (Luke and Cleopas) in the town of Emmaus. This is one of my favourites in the National Gallery www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/michelangelo-merisi-da-caravaggio-the-supper-at-emmaus and I thought if you logged on to see this picture a short 'art lesson' or explanation of its content might be of interest to you.



The painting is unusual for the life-sized figures and the dark and blank background the main chiastic of Caravaggio's paintings being the way he uses a brilliant white light – he had a special almost fluorescent mixture he used - to draw the viewers' attention.

The first thing we notice is that there are only three seated at table the empty space is immediately in front of us and it is here Jesus invites us to join the altar table and the eucharistic meal – as it is in the breaking of bread that he – the risen Lord – was revealed.

Jesus was not recognised at this time – this is illustrated by the fact that he does not have a beard. In Mark's Gospel Jesus is said to have appeared to them "in another form", which may be why he is depicted beardless here, as opposed to the more traditional image of the bearded Christ His flowing robes cover any indications of the wounds he suffered during the crucifixion. Instead, he is recognized from a gesture – his raised arm blessing the bread. At this motion, the two disciples are instantly aware of whom this traveling companion is.

Cleopas on the viewers right wears a scallop shell on his gilet. This was the subtle sign, a disguise that people used to signify that they were 'pilgrims following the road to God' and not the Roman way. The extended hand of Cleopas on the spectator's right appears to be almost touching the canvas itself, coming out from inside the picture gesturing for us to join in the revelation with a challenging extension of his arms almost it is without doubt a sign of reverence and recognition as Jesus extends his hand in the blessing of the meal

The more you stare at the painting the more it becomes real and the elbow of the other apostle looks electrified as if it has actually torn through the canvas so you might touch it, a clever idea Caravaggio creates by ripping the elbow in the jacket sleeve. This disciple throws back his arms pushing his chair back in surprise as if he is going to leap to his feet or drop to the floor in adoration; there is no restraint the gesture begs us to become enveloped by the story

The innkeeper looks on unfazed by the gesture and confused by the whole commotion in reality he is oblivious to Christ's message – we have to think that he will shortly understand as the darkness he stands in in the picture will shortly be replaced by the light of revelation.

All three of these figures show real emotion. Caravaggio's picture is not stylised it's real and alive the disciples have rough hands showing signs of wear and life. Their faces are wrinkled showing natural ageing. Their clothes are worn. The innkeeper has his sleeves rolled up and a face unshaven. These are real people with real lives and real signs of hard work, and they are depicting the reality of the risen Lord.

On the table we can see so much more than just a still-life meal; the basket of food teeters perilously over the edge illustrating the upheaval in the apostle's world their lives were tottering on the brink of existence as Jesus their Messiah had been crucified. almost falling over, shows life, resurrection, and rebirth.

The choice of fruit on the table is, however, surely deliberate; for combined with the other items on the table, it has a symbolic meaning. The apple, here going rotten, is, of course, a symbol of the Temptation and of the Fall of Man. The coming of Christ is symbolized by the beam of light reflected through the glass vessel onto the tablecloth, which can be understood as a symbol of the Virgin Birth - the light penetrates the glass without breaking it - and the bread is easily recognizable as symbolic of the body of Christ, the Incarnation. Finally, the Sacrifice of Christ is symbolized by the grapes.

Grapes are the source of the wine, which becomes, at the Roman Catholic Eucharist, the Blood of Christ. Accordingly, Caravaggio has used the basket of fruit to emphasize and to underpin the meaning of the story that he paints.

At the time of painting it was realised that the sight of out of season summer fruit in the basket when Easter was in the spring was to illustrate the growing season was at hand

The apples grapes and split pomegranate in the basket are, moreover, ancient Christian symbols of sin, redemption, and resurrection.

The fowl on the plate is mirroring death. It has also been said that if you look closely the shadow created by the fruit basket is the tail of a fish, another symbol of Christ.

Have you noticed that there is no longer a floor in the picture; where did it go? Well Caravaggio wants us to realise that the actual floor in the real world, our own space in our own time. Caravaggio breaks down the traditional barrier between what is real and what is painted and transforms a scene that happened in the past into something that is happening now, before our very eyes.

But what of us? Are we standing in the dark facing the table or has our chair simply been pushed back so we become onlookers? I think we by virtue of our faith in the resurrection, in the second coming, would have seen the miracle in the picture and understood our pilgrim's road to salvation.

END FACTS is not certain for whom Caravaggio painted his *Supper at Emmaus*, but we do know that it was made in Rome, probably in 1602, at the height of the Counter-Reformation. ***The Council of Trent***, established to combat the continued threat of Protestantism, had declared in 1563 "that by means of the stories of the mysteries of our Redemption, portrayed by paintings or other representations, the people are instructed and confirmed in the habit of remembering and continually revolving in mind the articles of faith ... also because the miracles which God has performed are set before the eyes of the faithful, that they may give God thanks, and may be excited to adore and love God and to cultivate piety."

Deacon Michael