

### The Third Sunday of Easter – 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020 – The Gospel of Luke Chapter 24 v 13 – 35

On this third Sunday of Easter, during these wonderful forty days leading to the Ascension of Jesus into Heaven and the coming down of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, our Gospel today records for us the account of Jesus' resurrection appearance to the two disciples on their journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the evening of that first Easter day. As Jesus walks by their side, He expounds to them "**starting with Moses and going through all the prophets**" how all the scriptures point to Him and find their fulfilment in Him, for "**was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into His Glory?**"

Here is the mystery of God's pre-ordination. We do not know to which Old Testament scriptures Jesus referred when, throughout forty days of further resurrection appearances, He continued to teach the disciples all those things concerning Himself and the Kingdom of God ( Acts 1 v 3 ) but scripture suggests, His descent from Abraham ( Gen. 12 v 3; Mtt 1 v 1 ), His descent from David ( Jer. 23 v 5, Is. 9 v 7; Lk. 1 v 32 ), His Birth in Bethlehem ( Micah 5 v 2,4; Lk 2 v 11 ), His Virgin Birth ( Is. 7 v 14; Lk 2 v 11), and that in His Suffering and Death He should be betrayed ( Ps. 41 v 9; Jn 13 v 18 ), for forty pieces of silver ( Zech. 11 v 12; Mtt. 26 v 15/16), scourged ( Is. 50 v 6; Mtt. 26 v 30,67 ), crucified ( Zech. 12 v 10; Ps. 22 v 16; Jn 20 v 25f ), with the wicked ( Is. 53 v 9,12; Mk. 15 v 27 ), lots cast for His clothing ( Ps. 22 v 18; Jn. 19 v 23 ), His Bones unbroken ( Ex. 12 v 46; Jn. 19 v 23 ), buried with the rich ( Is. 53 v 9; Mtt. 27 v 57f ), that He shall rise from the dead ( Ps. 16 v 10; Lk. 24 v 6 ) and be taken up into heaven ( Ps. 24 v 7f; Jn. 6 v 62; Acts 1 v 9f ) – and yet, in the providence of God, all these things "freely" happened both through the perfectly surrendered will of Jesus but also through the disobedience and rebellion of our fallen nature – as described in our first reading today ( Acts 2 v 23 – "this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified by the hands of lawless men" ).

It is clear from Scripture and the constant teaching of the Church, that the pre-ordained events in the Life of Jesus ( brought about through our own acts both of obedience and disobedience ) have not yet, thus far, been exhausted. Even as His pre-ordained Birth, Death and Resurrection were brought about in and through the will of others, so also His pre-ordained Return, His Second Coming, is pre-ordained through the events of history, and through the behaviours of others today and in the days to come. The Ascension of Jesus which we shall celebrate on Ascension Thursday (21st May ) powerfully reminds us of the pre-ordination of the Return of Jesus – "*men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven*" ( Acts 1 v 11 ).

As, in our readings today, we recall that the Life of Jesus fulfils both the Law and the Prophets ( Luke 24 v 27 ) and the pre-ordained plan of God ( Acts 2 v 23 ), we are reminded that there are in Scripture more prophecies and promises relating to His Second Coming than to His First Coming and we are encouraged, in Scripture, to interpret the signs of the times ( Mtt. 16 v 3 ) so that "**when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near**" ( Luke 21 v 28 ).

In that same sermon of St. Peter, on the Day of Pentecost ( our first reading today ) he quotes from the prophet Joel, "*In the Last Days it shall be, says the Lord, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh – and I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth beneath – before the Day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day*" ( Acts 2 v 17 – 21 ).

We continue to pray – as we have been praying – that through this long "Good Friday" of the Church ( the suspension of the public celebration of Mass and the dislocation of the Church – the result of our human behaviours) the Lord will bring us ( through divine pre-ordination and a deeper and hidden providence ) to Resurrection and a New Pentecost in the life of the Church. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! ( Revelation 22 v 20 ).

"Holy Spirit, Lord of light, From the clear celestial height, Thy pure beaming radiance give; Come Thou Father of the poor, Come with treasures that endure, Come Thou Light of all that live! Heal our wounds, our strength renew, On our dryness pour Thy dew, Wash the stains of guilt away, Bend the stubborn heart and will, Melt the frozen, warm the chill, Guide the steps that go astray. Thou, on those who evermore, Thee confess and Thee adore, In Thy sevenfold gifts descend. Give them comfort when they die, Give them life with Thee on high, Give them joys that never end". Amen! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!