

WAY TO EMMAUS

This way is our way. We are all on the way – being pilgrims – we are wayfarers. Note that only one of the two disciples is mentioned. Some say that is because Luke may have been the other disciple. I don't know, in heaven you will know, but I didn't think that Saint Luke had yet arrived on the historical scene. Well who is the unknown disciple travelling with Cleophas? If may be you!

On the way to Emmaus, about eleven kilometres from Jerusalem, Our Lord approaches these two disciples. God seeks out those who are sad and heavy of heart to console them. Yet how often people don't recognise Him? How often we don't recognize him? Why don't we recognise him? We are like these disciples. We let our hurt, our fears, our pain blind us from Him. When we think that God does not care He is really there. Mother Teresa, now Saint Teresa, could always see the face of Christ, the presence of God in the poor and unwanted.

On the way to the village, when Our Lord approached the disciples who were sorrowful, note that he asked them what was happening: 'We hoped that it was He that should have redeemed Israel'. Before we want to teach someone or help them we need to listen. So God listens to their trials and tribulations.

Then, while walking alongside them, in order that they may be helped to see, to open their minds, he stops and calls them foolish. They like us, can easily be confused and misunderstand the ways of God. Be not deceived, we are all fools before God.

In order that they might see the Author of truth he explains his truths of the Bible to them. It was when they learned the sacred Scriptures, according to God's ways, that their hearts thawed and their eyes gradually opened.

He explained to them all of the prophets! How many OT prophets were there? There are seventeen prophetic books in the OT written by the four major prophets – Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Isaiah and the 12 minor. Of course, some of them were more prolific in their messianic references and teachings than others, such as Isaiah. Nevertheless, the Lord quoting from here and there, exegetically piecing together the prophetic data would have been truly illuminating. And as their minds were slowly opened to the truth, somewhat like the winding up of the blind to let in the morning sun, they felt within a longing for his presence. At the same time they admitted that this caused their hearts to warm towards him. Truth is related to love. One is in the head and the other in the heart. We all know the saying: "You cannot love what you do not know!" Learning proceeds loving.

Have you ever wondered though what is greater: truth or love? It is a hard question to answer. One effects the other and they are both so important. One is the root and the other is the fruit. In this life it is the root or truth that matters most and for the next life it is the fruit or charity – for you shall know them by their fruits.

As the story develops, once their hearts are warmed by his holy word and the day is far spent, they say: "Stay with us Lord ... ". It is then that they recognise the Lord, his presence is manifest. At the end of our life, when it is nearly spent, at our twilight, will we not also say: "Stay with us Lord"

One person who helped many see the presence of God in their lives was St. Catherine of Siena who was born during the outbreak of the plague in Siena, Italy in 1347. Catherine herself was a twin, but her sister did not survive infancy. Her mother was 40 when she was born.

Despite Catherine's religious nature, she did not choose to enter a convent and instead she joined the Third Order of St. Dominic, which allowed her to associate with a religious society while living at home. Fellow Dominican sisters taught St. Catherine how to read. Meanwhile, she lived quietly, isolated within her family home.

Something changed her when she was 21. She described an experience she referred to as her "mystical marriage to Christ." Such mystical experiences change people, and St. Catherine was no exception. In her vision, she was told to reenter public life and to help the poor and sick. She immediately rejoined her family and went into public to help people in need. She often visited hospitals and homes where the poor and sick were found.

St. Catherine was drawn further into the world as she worked, and eventually she began to travel, calling for reform of the Church and for people to confess and to love God totally. She became involved in politics, and was key in working to keep city states loyal to the Pope. On one occasion, she visited a condemned political prisoner and was credited with saving his soul, which she saw being taken up to heaven at the moment of his death.

From 1375 onwards, St. Catherine began dictating letters to scribes. She petitioned for peace and was instrumental in persuading the Pope in Avignon to return to Rome. She became involved in the fractured politics of her time and in restoring the Papacy to Rome during a time of factional conflict and war between the Italian city states. She is credited with composing over 400 letters, her Dialogue, which is her definitive work, and her prayers. These works are so influential that St. Catherine would later be declared a Doctor of the Church. She is one of the most influential and popular saints in the Church.

By 1380, the 33-year-old mystic had become ill and she died on April 29, following a stroke just a week prior. Like her may we bring the truth and thus the presence and peace of Christ to others.