

Have Dies (Song) EASTER PREFACE

DEC. 0-20 14

Last Monday I read for you, and played a song about, the story from St Luke's gospel (about) the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, on the first Easter Day. From my friends who are scriptural scholars, I gather that not only is there a deliberate and definite point in St Luke's choosing to include this particular incident in his gospel (that's true, generally, of the way the gospels were put together), but that there's a kind of "code"-significance in the incident taking place 'on the road', 'in the way'. When St Luke has the two disciples saying to each other "were not our hearts burning within us when He spoke to us on the road", that was much more than a nicely-rounded sentence. For, "on the road", "in the way" was a code-phrase for the Christian community: the primitive church used "the Way" as a description of itself; and the first Christians understood their life as The Way. So St Luke is doing much more than simply recounting an incident or a story: he's giving spiritual direction too (as we'd call it today) — pointing out that the risen Christ is recognised and met among His disciples, in the life and worship of the Christian community where we listen to the Word of God, hear the scriptures opened to us, and share together in hospitality and the breaking of bread. The 'way', quite simply, means Christianity. And you'll notice this usage right through the Acts of the Apostles, St Luke's other book which is, appropriately, the source for the first scripture readings each day during the whole Easter

season for the Mass liturgy. For instance, at his conversion St Paul acknowledges how he ^{had} persecuted "the Way": and he spoke about it in his own Roman trial to indicate that his Christianity wasn't a kind of random choice, a private affair of personal preferences, but the way, truth and life. | And those three words, of course, remind us of St John's gospel and that declaration of Christ who said that He Himself is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Christ is the Way, the Truth, whom to possess is to possess truth and life. They're not directly related, these two usages from two different gospels: yet we can, I think, link them in our Eastertime reflections and prayers on the word of God. It is God we seek, in prayer and listening to the scriptures: the Risen Christ whom we want to see and meet and talk with, on our life-journeys, as we search for answer to mending questions about life, search for understanding. Christ is the Way: and His first followers, including men and women who were eye-witnesses to the events of His human life on earth, were bold enough to call themselves, as a group, and the way they lived, the Way also. They already knew He was with them, among them: that these people would find and meet Him — not just a teacher, a system of beliefs and practices, but Life and Truth itself, the Way to God. Listen now, to another song about Emmaus, and the meaning of that gospel

Woe No
Winds Blow
2'

MUSIC (Emmaus)
PRAYERS

Maybe one of the reasons why those two disciples walking a country road
 on the first Easter Sunday didn't more quickly or easily recognize Christ
 with them, was their pre-occupation — they were pre-occupied with
 their own worries, their own ideas of what should have happened,
 their own disappointed hopes: they were sad and downcast... and
 couldn't see. Isn't that very often our story, too? a very human
 story, for not only individuals but groups as well, societies, peoples,
 nations, pre-occupied with themselves, their own worries. | It's
 instructive that, in St John's gospel just before Christ's saying that He is
 the Way, He tells His disciples not to let their hearts be troubled.
 Being too turned inward, you risk not only not recognizing the stranger
 who joins you on the road, but even not accepting his company
 and allowing him to talk with you, giving him the chance to ask
 you why you're troubled, and to open the scriptures to you. It's
 a pity that so often it's only afterwards that people (like the two
 at Emmaus) recognize who's been there with them all along. But
 at least those two were so excited and overjoyed that they rushed
 back to share their good news and good fortune with their brothers
 and sisters. And you, in the Way, when you meet and recognize Him?
 Don't let your heart be so troubled that you forget He is the Way,
 or that you'll meet Him in the way.