

15th April 2020

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him.

Luke 24:30-31

I am someone who can have difficulty recognising people that I don't know well or haven't seen for some time. If an apparent stranger approaches and engages with me, it may be a while before a familiar turn of phrase or gesture opens my eyes to who he or she is.

Jesus' disciples had a similar problem following his resurrection. Mary Magdalene took him for the gardener until he spoke her name. Thomas had to see his wounds. And in Luke's story, two disciples on the road to Emmaus walked and talked with an apparent stranger for several miles before sitting down at table with him, where he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. It was then that their eyes were opened and they recognised him.

We don't know what initially kept the disciples from recognising Jesus. Perhaps they were blinded by their own tears. But the good news is that their blindness did not stop Jesus from coming to them. He does not limit his appearances to those with full confidence in him. He comes to the disappointed, the doubtful, the disconsolate. He comes to those who do not recognise him even when they are walking right beside him.

He comes to us when we do not recognise him, which is most of the time. But although we do not recognise him, Jesus recognises each and every one of us. That, at least in part, is the message of Easter: while our dim, unfocused eyes see through a glass darkly, he, who knows every sparrow, sees each one of us as a beloved child of God. Whether we recognise him or not, whether we believe in him or not, or even know his name, again and again, Jesus comes and walks a little way with us along whatever road we are following. And in his company he offers us, as he did at Emmaus new faith, new hope and a new vision of light that not even the darkness that hangs over our world today can overcome.

*Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me,
Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me, Christ beneath me,
Christ above me, Christ in the hearts of all that love me,
Christ in the mouth of friend and stranger.*

Attributed to St. Patrick