

Today's readings reveal something beautiful about how we can experience the risen Presence of Jesus in Scripture – in the Bible – but I want to begin with a humorous parable. Parables use familiar, everyday imagery to illustrate complex, divine truths. They're designed to bridge the gap between our physical world and the Kingdom of Heaven – which Jesus says, "Is among you." *A priest had dinner at the home of a couple in the parish. After he left, and the couple had done the dishes, the wife said to the husband, "I think he stole one of our spoons." This bothered them for a whole year. A year later, the couple had the priest over for dinner again. Unable to resist, the wife asked, "Did you steal our spoon last year?" Chuckling, the priest replied, "No, I put it in your Bible."* Now I would **never** do that to you... but do you know what? I left home 27 years ago, and I can tell you exactly where our family Bible is because it has never left the bookcase!

The Gospel we just heard is known as 'The Road to Emmaus'. The story takes place in the afternoon of Easter Sunday and describes what happens when human beings begin to grapple with the reality **of** Jesus' resurrection. The two disciples have already heard about the empty tomb from the two Mary's **and** their friends, but even so, they don't understand what Jesus' resurrection means; their faces are downcast because they have not yet experienced the joy of the resurrection. "*As they talked this over,*" we heard – see, they're actually trying to make sense of it all, which is necessary for us – "*Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him.*" And so, he begins to unpack and explain all the Old Testament passages that were about himself.

Did you know that Biblical scholars can point to over 300 Old Testament verses which are **about** and are fulfilled **by** Jesus? The reality today, however, is that many Catholics have no idea **how** to **read** or **interpret** the Bible in light of Jesus' resurrection. There are a number of reasons for this including that old chestnut of lay people being told to **not** read the Bible, right? Well, there's **some** truth in that, but only in the early Church to stop the spread of unauthorised Bible translations and to prevent the spread of heresies. Also, since most lay people could not read Latin, which was the official translation of the Bible in the early Church, they relied on clergy to explain the Scriptures during Mass.

None of those reasons exist today, but culturally, and very unfortunately, Biblical illiteracy continues to exist today, and it's preventing people from encountering the risen Presence of Jesus. Those who **do** invest time into **studying, praying** with, and **discussing** the Bible often experience the same gift the two disciples received on the road: *"Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?"*

**The** greatest single-piece-of-advice I've ever received in relation to reading the Bible came from Fr Anthony Mellor, a Brisbane priest, who said to me, "Josh, it's about making connections." As I've reflected on that wisdom over the last decade, it's as though Jesus himself spoke through Fr Anthony, explaining how I can understand Jesus' resurrection as some**thing** not just to **believe** in, but some**one** to **experience**. See, people can be faithful, practicing Catholics their entire life, but if they've never learnt how to read the Bible – assuming they even **own** one – it's likely that they've never knowingly encountered the risen Jesus other than in the Eucharist. God isn't just present when we receive Eucharist and so we need to

resist boxing Jesus up into our personal reception of Him each week.

Those who **do** knowingly encounter the risen Christ often do so when they begin making connections between different verses and Testaments in the Bible. Like the two disciples – and also St Paul himself – they often experience their eyes being opened and realising that Jesus has already been accompanying them on the road.

As a practical way to respond to the readings and this homily today, I invite you to a Bible 101 workshop right here on Thursday this week with Beth and I. There are two workshop options: one at 4pm and one at 6pm. Both 90min sessions will cover the same material, so you only need to come to one. Please bring your Bible, notepad and pen. If you don't yet have a Bible, we'll have some spares for you to use on the night. Friends, learning how to **read**, make **connections**, and **interpret** the Word of God is the **single most important thing** that will make a positive difference in your faith journey. As St Jerome said, "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." I look forward to seeing you here at 4pm **or** 6pm this Thursday as we walk the Road to Emmaus together and seek the Presence of Jesus in the joy of the resurrection.