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PRAESENTATA CURIA

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The lessons from a christian journey

I am looking ahead at next Sunday's Gospel passage from St. Luke about the disciples on the road to Emmaus. One of them is named Cleopas. And some have commented that this sounds close to those words in St. John's account of the Passion when he says that "standing by the Cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. Who is this Mary wife of Clopas? Could she be the other person on the road to Emmaus with her husband Cleopas or Clopas, the error caused by a copyist somewhere? So this may have been a husband and wife team on their way home after the Passover.

Sometimes when a tragedy happens, when people have suffered a devastating blow to their hopes, they go quiet and silent and may even bury their grief. Just today I had a request to do with a case of someone who hadn't spoken of a death for years and who now needed counselling. But maybe a husband and wife team can talk about things and in their tender relationship facilitate each other in talking about their grief.

I was with someone reflecting on this passage a few nights ago and he said that what struck him is the way they were all listening to each other and allowing each other to speak out. When Jesus asked, "What is this that you are talking about?" it shows that they were talking about Jesus. Because Cleopas answered, "All about Jesus of Nazareth!" If someone stopped any of us and asked us what we were talking about how many would say, "All about Jesus of Nazareth!"

They had set their hearts on him. They loved him. They still felt they had to speak about him because something about him was good and gave hope. Many have commented that the word *Listen* is one of the most used and important words in the Bible. "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him!"

There are many ways to listen to Jesus. Above all we must listen to the Gospels and learn from his words and deeds. This cannot bear fruit unless it is done in an atmosphere of prayer, when we open ourselves to Christ, the Risen Lord, present to us. There with his very person we can explore with him and hence listen properly to him as he opens the Word of God to us.

But the two disciples were already sharing with each other when the event of Jesus before Jesus arrived. And when we talk about our faith with each other we actually are like the disciples who plough a furrow and prepare the way for Jesus to come to us. When I listen to



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people discussing a Scripture passage I always gain insights because we all from our various angles can see aspects of the word someone else could not see and in that way we help each other to deepen our grasp of God's word. Of course because we are human we might be mistaken and get it wrong. We must be humble. But when we share something of our faith, which must always have Jesus centre stage, we can open a door for him. And since he said to us that where two or three are gathered in his name he is in our presence when we are engaged with him.

He was with these disciples in their down moment. He gate-crashed so to speak. "What are you talking about?" It is one of the great lessons in counselling. He actually helped their listening. He helped them to spill out their pain and suffering and in the process he healed them. He just gets them to talk and they lay out their hurt and disappointment. They lay out maybe how stupid they were in following him. They may even feel that they were now open to being castigated by others for their credulity and naiveness, or for leading others astray.

Have you ever had that experience of being made to think or believe that you got something wrong when you in fact were right all along. That is what they are about to experience. Jesus always gives us hope. If there is one thing this reading is saying it is that when things look their worst Christ is right with us. Something is preventing us seeing him but he is there.

There is a tradition that in some way this Mary, wife of Clopas, or related in some way to Clopas, had some relationship to Our Lady. There is a tradition that says that Cleopas/Clopas was the brother of St. Joseph. So she was a sister-in-law of Our Lady. She stood in solidarity with Our Lady at the foot of the Cross in her worst hour. And maybe part of their pain and being down-cast was also something to do with Our Lady. Which all might explain how this passage appears only in St. Luke's Gospel. Because we know St. Luke had Our Lady as one of his sources and it would make sense that Our Lady would have heard this story told in its drama to her by her brother and sister-in law and so convey it to him. She pondered it in her heart and ensured it would be passed on to us because she wanted us to have hope in our darkest hours.

We will have many ahead. But the Lord walks with us all the time. Our Lady wants us to know that. We do not recognise him but he is in everything with us.

Fr Paul Churchill