



HOMILY 17th July 2024

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They didn't listen, those Assyrian invaders we heard about in the first reading... The Assyrians were supposed to be God's instrument who were to humble Israel. But they went beyond the Lord's mandate and as a result were going to experience a burning, a consuming, destroying fire which comes from failing to listen, from failing to hear.

Those disciples walking to Emmaus that first Easter day, Cleopas and, I believe, his wife had listened, but they hadn't heard. They weren't on their "sit down" for they were talking about all that had happened as this stranger stepped into their conversation. "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" Jesus asked.

Cleopas responds, telling the whole story of the Christ event from their disappointed perspective. They had listened, but they certainly hadn't heard, for their own hope was that Jesus was the one who was to redeem Israel. He was supposed to make Israel great again!

"Oh, how foolish you are," Jesus said, "and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared" as he takes them on a journey of understanding and illumination, as he opens the scriptures to them. And as he talks, their hearts begin to burn within them with understanding and love.

Listening and illumination go hand in hand... We see it in the Scriptures when prophets were called, in the calls of Mary, Joseph, the Twelve and many others. They hear the call in the depths of their heart, and they become illuminated, listening with their ears, hearing in their burning hearts as Christ "the Word" illuminates their way.

Jesus, too, listens, hears, and is illuminated. In the Gospel he cries out in delight, *I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do.* Such listening reveals a perfection of God and indicates the path we must take to grow in perfection and holiness. Indeed, your mutual promise "to love and honour you all the days of my life" calls you both to a continual sharing of your inner self and deep listening.

And yet it is easier said than done, isn't it? Because married couples and or parents are busy... So easily our work, community, interests, social media and our world can erode and corrode relationships. When that is allowed to happen that is when the burning, consuming, destroying fire of the first reading can so easily undermine even the best relationship.

In the journey of marriage, and priesthood also, it is easy to become so engrossed with what is going on around us. Often, we don't realise that we are walking away from the cross, the great sign of the



covenant of love, and away from Jerusalem, the great city symbolising God dwelling with us where are all held in unity, peace and love.

The sit-down is a key dimension of Teams and the journey to Emmaus can help illuminate the “sit down” for us. See how Christ becomes present to them. They were alone on the road, no distractions... time and space. So how do you still yourselves and become intentionally present to each other? How do you put aside everything else and create your space and time for the sit down?

“What are you discussing with each other?” he asked. He wanted to listen to them, to hear them. He wasn't in a hurry. Then they listened to him, as he opened the Scripture passages that referred to him. As they listened, their hearts began to burn within them as they came to a new understanding of Him who they still did not recognise.

How do you listen and how do you hear as a couple? Do you take time to notice the heart burning within you as your share? Do you discuss where is the risen Christ who wants to lead you as a married couple? The Synodal process also invites us to listen to where the Spirit is leading us in the midst of the spiritual conversation. See too the sit down as a spiritual conversation where the risen Christ walks and talks with you as he did with the couple on the road to Emmaus.

May the sit down be for you a “with hearts burning” moment where you recognise the risen Lord. With him may you cry out with delight. *We bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do. May he do great things through you, with you and in you within your marriage.*

