

## SESSION 5 / CHRIST, OUR HOPE

*Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:2).*

**Theme** The resurrection of Christ is the motive for our hope. He is risen and invites us to share in his eternal glory. This hope impels us to build his Kingdom here on earth without being defeated by apparent failure.

### **Welcome: We Pray and Share Together** (15 mins)

O God,  
send forth your Holy Spirit  
into our hearts that we might perceive,  
into our minds that we might remember,  
into our souls that we might meditate.  
Inspire us to speak with love, holiness,  
tenderness and mercy.  
Teach, guide and direct our thoughts and senses  
from beginning to end.  
May your grace help us to see with your eyes  
and to act with your love and light in our hearts.  
May we be strengthened with wisdom from on high  
for the sake and glory of your kingdom.  
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.  
Amen.

In a period of calm and a space of trust, each one of us is invited to share briefly one thing that has happened in the past week. It could be one thing that has given you cause for concern, something shared during the last time you met as a group or something that has given you cause to celebrate.

In this moment of peace and fellowship, we pray for the good of the group. Each member is invited to offer up any personal intentions. We also pray for the good of the Church, for wisdom in our country and for the common good. Let us also bring to mind the poor, the sick and those who have died.

We join together in praying: Our Father...

### **Read and Reflect on the Scriptures** Luke 24:13-35 (5 mins)

Note: The meeting of the risen Christ with the disciples on their way to Emmaus takes place in the Gospel of Luke on the day of resurrection. Christ walks alongside the despondent disciples and takes time to restore in them a new hope in Him.

A variety of short prayers before the reading of Scripture can be found on page 46.

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognising him. And he said to them, 'What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?' And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?' And he said to them, 'What things?' And they said to him, 'Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.' And he said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognised him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?' And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

### **Meditate on the Word** Luke 24:13-35 (20 mins)

Once the Scripture passage has been read you are asked to choose a word or phrase that has struck you. Underline it with a pen or you might wish to simply hold it in mind. You will be invited to share the word or phrase with the group.

Another person will then read the passage. While you listen attentively, repeat the process of holding onto a word or phrase, making a note and sharing it. In doing this, you are invited to consider the following questions:

How have these words or phrases resonated in my heart and in my mind?

What is the Lord saying to me at this very moment in my life?

In what way has my reading of this passage of Holy Scripture changed me?

How has it helped me to resolve to be more Christ-like in the coming days?

You are encouraged to re-read the Holy Scripture during the coming week, revisiting these questions.

### **Explore and Reflect on the Theme** (25 mins)

On the way to Emmaus, we find two disciples whose hope has been destroyed by the crucifixion and death of Jesus: 'we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.' The disciples have experienced the crushing disappointment that can happen after a great hope has come to nothing. Their hope is disappointed because it had been entirely focused on a specific outcome (hoping that) instead of being primarily placed in Jesus Christ (hoping in). Jesus Christ did redeem Israel, and the whole of humanity, but not in the way they had expected.

Jesus encounters the disciples on the way and lets them express their despondency. He invites them to recount the event of his death from their own perspective. Not even the account of the empty tomb was reason enough for them to stay in Jerusalem. There is nothing for them to hope for now, and they are returning to the daily routine of their everyday life. Yet after their encounter with Jesus, the two pilgrims are filled with a new hope, rebuilt and nourished by the Lord who has opened the Scripture and broken the Bread for them. Having recognised the risen Lord, they rise in their turn to share with others their invincible hope in Him.

Disappointed hope, placed in human persons or outcomes, is something we all experience at some point in our life. As he did for the Emmaus pilgrims, Jesus offers us all a greater hope, which does not erase suffering and death but transfigures them in love and opens for us the horizons of God's eternal beatitude. By placing our hope in Christ, we surrender to Him the plans and terms of our human expectations and learn to trust Him unconditionally as we journey through life's joys and pains.

At every Mass, the risen Lord comes to nourish us with his Word and his Body, food for our common pilgrimage of hope. Like the disciples, we may be tempted to focus all our hope on specific outcomes, events, or persons. The Lord purifies our hope through the Liturgy of the Church, as we recall every day the history of our salvation and 'await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.'<sup>1</sup>

The hope of eternal life in God offered by the risen Lord is not a distraction from the present need to build God's Kingdom and to work and pray every day for greater justice and peace, out of love of neighbour. Rather, our hope in Christ inspires us to persevere through every challenge and difficulty, certain that his grace will never fail, and that his plan of love is mysteriously unfolding, especially under the weight of the cross.

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<sup>1</sup> Communion Rite from the Roman Missal, 2010 International Commission on English in the Liturgy.

## Responding to what has been heard

By committing ourselves to action we are saying that we want to make a difference in our lives and in the lives of others. We are committing to make hope resonate in our lives. What have you heard today that you find challenging? What do you find affirming? What are you going to do about what you have heard today?

## Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord (10 mins)

You are invited to close with a time of meditation on Psalm 42 (41). Read it slowly, pause between verses, reflect on its meaning for your life and your journey in faith, hope and love. You may also wish to conclude with the Lord's Prayer, another prayer of your own choosing or a moment of silence.

A: Like the deer that yearns  
for running streams,  
so my soul is yearning  
for you, my God.

B: My soul is thirsting for God,  
the living God;  
when can I enter and appear  
before the face of God?

A: My tears have become my bread,  
by day, by night,  
as they say to me all the day long,  
"Where is your God?"

All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A blessing taken from the Liturgy of the Hours is included here.

May the Lord bless us and keep us from all evil  
and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

## Jesus Christ is our Hope

Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, precedes us into the Father's glorious kingdom so that we, the members of his Body, may live in the hope of one day being with him for ever.

CCC 666

There is no surer pledge or dearer sign of this great hope in the new heavens and new earth "in which righteousness dwells," than the Eucharist. Every time this mystery is celebrated, "the work of our redemption is carried on" and we "break the one bread that provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the food that makes us live for ever in Jesus Christ."

CCC1405

The Lord, through whom our sins have been remitted, arose from the dead at the morning watch, so that we may hope that what went before in the Lord will take place in us. For our sins have been already forgiven: but we have not yet risen again... The Lord as it were thus speaks to us: What you have seen in Me, hope for in yourselves; that is, because I have risen from the dead, you also shall rise again.

St Augustine

if you are to be looking for everything in this world, what need is there for hope? What is hope then? It is feeling confidence in things to come. What great demand then does God make upon you, since He Himself gives you blessings quite entire from His own stores? One thing only, hope, He asks of you, that you too may have somewhat of your own to contribute toward your salvation.

St John Chrysostom



### **Meditate on Sacred Art: Visio Divina (5)**

Identify the persons depicted in the picture and reflect on their attitude. What are they looking at? Why?

List all the Eucharistic motifs and symbols present in the picture. What parallels can be made with the liturgical celebration of the Mass?

How has the artist depicted the transformation of the disciples and their new hope?

In a prayerful contemplation of the picture, reflect on your own journey with Christ, on the places and times when you may have experienced an encounter with Him, and ask Him to renew your hope in Him.

The Pilgrims of Emmaus (1905) by Henry Ossawa Tanner