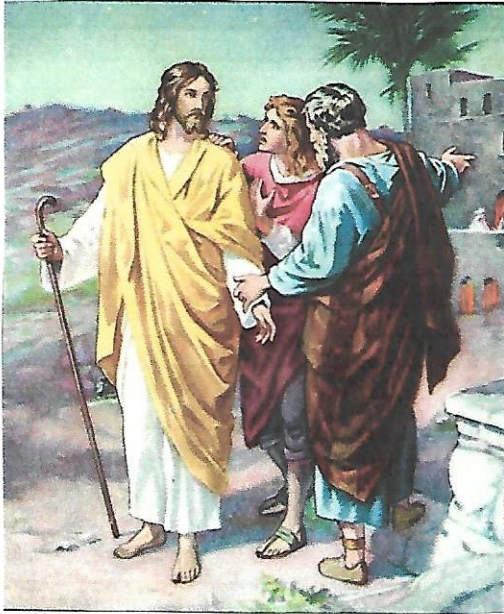


THE UPPER ALDE BENEFICE

The Third Sunday of Easter



My usual exercise takes the form of walking round my other parish in Halesworth – the one with eighteen holes. Unfortunately, that has not been possible since the lockdown. Almost without fail Westleton Heath has been the venue where exercise has taken place. There is a great deal to think and talk about. Apart from the sights and sounds of the countryside, there are thoughts and discussions about what has been happening in these extraordinary days.

One of my favourite stories which we read in these days after Easter is one which begins on the afternoon of that first miraculous Easter Sunday. Having just completed the observance of the Passover Sabbath, two disciples of Jesus (one identified as Cleopas) are making the seven-mile trip to the village of Emmaus. By identifying them as disciples, St Luke, who is the only Gospel writer to record this story, is emphasizing that these two were more than just impartial observers of the events of Holy Week.

It's possible to imagine how their discussion went. As well as anger at the great travesty of justice that had taken place, they must have felt emotionally shattered at what had befallen their beloved Teacher Jesus. Then the two were joined by a stranger who asked the subject of their conversation. The stranger then explained, to their astonishment, the *why* of the events of the past week. When they reached the village, the two disciples asked the stranger to stay with them. In the words from St Luke's Gospel that we have come to treasure, the two disciples 'came to know the Risen Christ in the breaking of the bread'.

You can find the whole narrative in St Luke 24:13-35.

St Luke's Easter night story parallels our own experience of the Eucharist. Sometimes we come to the Lord's Table feeling angry, hurt, despairing, alone, but at this table, coming to 'know him in the breaking of the bread.' We can experience the peace and presence of the Risen Christ.

I know that many of you have been tuning in to live-streamed services during this lockdown and have found them to be most valuable. However, we still miss going to church and not being able to take part in public worship. For those of us, like myself, who stand in the Catholic tradition of the Church of England, it goes against everything we believe that we are not able to celebrate the Holy Eucharist and receive the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is possible to make an act of Spiritual Communion which you might like to use when you either watch live-streamed worship or at the time when you would normally be at church in your village.

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.