

Daniel's Reflection for Week Beginning 20th March

Open your eyes

I have long wondered why the risen Jesus was unrecognised by Mary and the disciples . But something clicked in my heart as I recently listened to the Dominican Timothy Radcliffe. It wasn't, he said, that they knew Jesus before and did not recognise him now. It was more that they never really knew him, or rather, as Herbert McCabe put it, 'They thought they knew him and now they were meeting the real Jesus as if for the first time.' The miracle of Easter was already opening their eyes. The blindfold preventing them from fully recognising him before was now being removed. Love was bringing clear vision. It was transforming the blurred, the false; it was revealing the real. The beautiful. For one bright moment they glimpsed pure truth. . .

The gift of true seeing has always been at the heart of Christianity. Easter is about taking away rather than about adding on; more about subtraction than addition; more about unblocking than increasing. It happened to those on the road to Emmaus. Pope Benedict in *Spe Salvi* writes 'Before the risen Christ's gaze all falsehood melts away . . . The holy power of his love sears through us like a flame.' No wonder their hearts burned within them. And then, before their very eyes, the fierce invincibility and utter vulnerability of our human God were constellated in a fistful of bread in the rough surface of a stained table in a country inn.

. . .

Only love can catch the truth. The hidden Christ in the sightless tomb, had embraced and transformed all that blurs and blinds. Everything around him that morning was about recognition. What was until then partially perceived now found its fullest definition. Those who loved and suffered most recognised him first – the beloved disciple Johan and Mary. Only with the painfully purified heart do we see rightly. There is an apprenticeship to the vision of love. The disciples heading for Eammaus had to learn the steps. So must we. To be sure, it is gift. But gift, like surprise, favoured the prepared heart. First, the wise one counselled, try to see and love a stone. Then try to see and love a cloud. Wait a while and begin to love a petal, a bird, a star; and then, and only then, try to see and love a human being, 'Christ', Thomas Aquinas insisted, 'is rising.'

Anything, anywhere, any time can be an apprenticeship into the really real. Nothing is too much to be an epiphany of eternity. And when it happens, like the first Easter, it stays forever.

(Unmasking God pp 28-30)