

Sunday Message

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

THE WORD

Year A • 23 April 2023 • Psalter Week 3

UNDERCOVER BOSS

LUKE 24:13-35



Several years ago, Channel 4 broadcast a series called *Undercover boss*. As the title suggests, it was about company bosses who went undercover to see what was really going on in their company.

They went on to the shop floor or into a warehouse or a forecourt to observe what was happening on the ground. And, of course, the employees had no idea that this new person stacking shelves or doing an inventory was actually their boss.

By going deep undercover, bosses were able to get an invaluable insight into what was happening in their company. Staff were frank, open, and uninhibited with the boss because they didn't know who he or she was.

They failed to recognise the boss. To them, it was simply a new employee, a stranger, someone needing to learn the ropes.

It's a little like what happens in the beautiful story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in today's Gospel. The two had spent so much time with Jesus, but they failed to recognise him until the breaking of bread. Only then did they realise they had been talking all along to their undercover boss. ■

REFLECT

The story of the two discouraged disciples encountering the stranger on the Emmaus road points to four ways we can recognise the risen Christ.

First, in gathering together. Christ is present whenever two or three gather together in his name. As Jesus was present to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, even though they did not recognise him, Jesus is present to us the moment we come together. He is here with us now, present in this community.

Second, in scripture. Jesus is present to us in the scriptures. According to Vatican II, "Christ is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the church." Do we really believe this? Or do we regard the readings as merely obscure texts,

snippets of history? Just as the hearts of the disciples burned within them as Jesus interpreted the scriptures on the road, we, too, must listen to Christ speaking to us in the scriptures with open, eager hearts.

Third, in the breaking of the bread. Jesus is present to us in the Eucharist. When we receive Holy Communion, it is Christ himself whom we receive. The question is, do we really recognise him, really believe this is Christ with us, Christ within us, just as the two disciples recognised him present with them at the breaking of the bread?

Fourth, in others. Jesus is present in all we meet. Remember the judgement scene in Matthew 25. On judgement day, on what basis will God separate the sheep from the goats, the saved from the lost? "I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty

PRAY

At the beginning of today's Gospel, the two disciples are dejected, without hope. Pray for all who feel crushed by hopelessness or despair, that they may know that God is with them.

LEARN

In the liturgy, Christ becomes visible

God is with us at all times

"The Lord meets us, men and women created in God's image and likeness (Gen 1:27) and becomes our companion on the way. In this sacrament ... Christ becomes for us the food of truth."

Pope Benedict, *Sacramentum Caritatis*

DO

Make a conscious effort today and at every Mass to listen to the readings and the words of consecration.

SAY

Say this beautiful prayer based on today's Gospel: "Stay with us, Lord Jesus, as evening falls. Be our companion on our way. In your mercy inflame our hearts and raise our hopes, so that, in union with all our brothers and sisters, we may recognise you in the scriptures and in the breaking of bread" (Evening Prayer, Monday Week 4).

and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; I was naked and you clothed me; sick and you visited me; in prison and you came to see me. For as often as you did this to one of the least of these sisters or brothers of mine, you did it to me."

As Christians, we are called to see the face of Christ wherever we look, especially in the uncomfortable places. In the face of the asylum seeker, the junkie, the mother struck down with cancer, the homeless boy shivering in a doorway on a freezing winter's night.

The risen Christ is present to us, with us, at all times and in so many guises. You could say he is our undercover boss.

The question is, how good are we at recognising him? ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cry out with joy to God, all the earth;
O sing to the glory of his name.
O render him glorious praise, alleluia.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Acts 2:14. 22-33

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

On the day of Pentecost Peter stood up with the eleven and addressed the crowd in a loud voice: "Men of Israel, listen to what I am going to say: Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God by the miracles and portents and signs that God worked through him when he was among you, as you all know. This man, who was put into your power by the deliberate intention and foreknowledge of God, you took and had crucified by men outside the Law. You killed him, but God raised him to life, freeing him from the pangs of Hades; for it was impossible for him to be held in its power since, as David says of him:

I saw the Lord before me always,
for with him at my right hand nothing can
shake me.

So my heart was glad
and my tongue cried out with joy:
my body, too, will rest in the hope
that you will not abandon my soul to Hades
nor allow your holy one to experience
corruption.

You have made known the way of life to me,
you will fill me with gladness through your
presence.

"Brothers, no one can deny that the patriarch David himself is dead and buried: his tomb is still with us. But since he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn him an oath to make one of his descendants succeed him on the throne, what he foresaw and spoke about was the resurrection of the Christ: he is the one who was not abandoned to Hades, and whose body did not experience corruption. God raised this man Jesus to life, and all of us are witnesses to that. Now raised to the heights by God's right hand, he has received from the Father the Holy Spirit, who was promised, and what you see and hear is the outpouring of that Spirit."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 15

Response:

Show us, Lord, the path of life.

Or Alleluia!

1. Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you.
I say to the Lord: "You are my God."
O Lord, it is you who are my portion and
cup;
it is you yourself who are my prize. (R.)
2. I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel,
who even at night directs my heart.
I keep the Lord ever in my sight:
since he is at my right hand, I shall stand
firm. (R.)
3. And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;
even my body shall rest in safety.
For you will not leave my soul among the
dead,
nor let your beloved know decay. (R.)
4. You will show me the path of life,
the fullness of joy in your presence,
at your right hand happiness for ever. (R.)

SECOND READING

1 Peter 1:17-21

A reading from the first letter of St Peter.

If you are acknowledging as your Father one who has no favourites and judges everyone according to what he has done, you must be scrupulously careful as long as you are living away from your home. Remember, the ransom that was paid to free you from the useless way of life your ancestors handed down was not paid in anything corruptible, neither in silver nor gold, but in the precious blood of a lamb without spot or stain, namely Christ; who, though known since before the world was made, has been revealed only in our time, the end of the ages, for your sake. Through him you now have faith in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory for that very reason – so that you would have faith and hope in God.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Lord Jesus, explain the scriptures to us.

Make our hearts burn within us as you talk
to us. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Luke 24:13-35

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Two of the disciples of Jesus were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. He said to them, "What matters are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped short, their faces downcast.

Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, "You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days." "What things?" he asked. "All about Jesus of Nazareth" they answered "who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people; and how our chief

priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they did not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing."

Then he said to them, "You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ would suffer and so enter into his glory?" Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself. When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. "It is nearly evening" they said "and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at the table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?"

They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, "Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The disciples recognised the Lord Jesus
in the breaking of the bread, alleluia.