

3rd SUNDAY OF EASTER - LK 24:13-35

"Were not our hearts burning within us?"

How do we accept our guests? How do we entertain our visitors? These questions or even an experience of having 'visitors' at this time of COVID-19 Pandemic, is absolutely impossible. But let's see our own experience/s before and most importantly imagine ourselves when everything gets back to the new normal, we will, for sure, receive guests and will visit everyone we know as much as possible.

Personally, I do not resent visitors. Like my parents, I love it when people come to visit and when I can exercise what is perhaps the most notable trait on our culture, hospitality. Both my parents are wonderful hosts and they passed that mark on me.

This is the 3rd Sunday of Easter and we are still discovering how we can experience Jesus alive in our midst. Last week, we saw how the doubting Thomas came in contact with the reality of the resurrection — by keeping in touch with the other disciples. Yes, there were doubts in his heart, but he was wise enough to maintain close ties with Jesus' companions and friends.

Today, the Gospel shows us another way of encountering the risen Jesus. It is through hospitality. The two disciples, returning disappointed to Emmaus, met a stranger who spoke to them convincingly and intriguingly. At the end of the day, they expressed the most ardent wish to this stranger:

"Stay with us... the day is almost over."

The stranger they met was Jesus Himself and when these two welcomed the Lord for the night, He revealed Himself to them. The Gospel is telling us that encountering Jesus is not meeting a spirit, a ghost, a mystical being. Meeting Jesus is meeting a person to whom we offer an open heart and outstretched arms.

When we welcome people, friends and strangers alike, Jesus is alive in our midst.

That is why our hospitality is actually a virtue extolled by the Scriptures. When was the last time you were hospitable to people around you? When was the last time you indicated your willingness to receive others into your life? Even a simple but sincere smile can make a difference in the life of another person.

Hospitality is not primarily about food or entertaining people in our living rooms with stories, jokes, and banter. Hospitality starts with the heart — *"Were not our hearts burning within us?"* — when we stretch our hearts to accommodate people who need us. To be hospitable is to be loving, understanding, charitable, even in situations when we are ourselves downcast and disappointed, like nowadays in the midst of experiencing being lonely and alone because of the lockdown, like the two disciples.

One mission we must never forget is the **mission to be hospitable**. Let us pray for this grace to be gracious to people who come to us, to be welcoming even to strangers who need our help.

I hope and pray that when you received a phone call or email from one of the members of our community and family, we were able to say, like the disciples of Jesus — *"were not our hearts burning within us?"*

We can be hospitable to everyone by a simple communication. It could only be a simple phone call, sharing of jokes and stories or reflections.



The encounter with Jesus is not meeting with a spirit, a ghost, a mystical being. The encounter with Jesus is meeting with a person to whom we offer an open heart and outstretched arms.

Remember this: **people around you can encounter Jesus through and with you!**

-Fr Francis Constantino
26th April 2020