

075a – Third Sunday of Easter B – 2024

Fulfilling the Scriptures

At the time of Jesus, the Jewish people gave the highest importance to the Scriptures, which for them consisted of the Law (the first five books of the Old Testament), the writings of the prophets and the psalms. They could only accept Jesus as the Messiah if the Scriptures foretold him.

And that was a problem, a stumbling block for many Jews, because the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) make no specific mention of a suffering Messiah – one who would save the people by walking the way of the cross. Indeed, the Scriptures hinted more at a triumphant Messiah who would conquer Israel's enemies and return Israel to its former glory.

But when you read the Jewish Scriptures in the light of the Christ-event, after it happened, suddenly many passages, stories and verses jump out as pointing to him: To give just a few examples:

- The songs of the suffering servant of God that we find in the prophet Isaiah, that we hear in Holy Week: about whom the Lord says: 'by his suffering shall my servant justify many'. (Isaiah 53:11)
- The story of Joseph who was sold into slavery by his brothers; a terrible act that ultimately saved his family. (Genesis Chs 37-50)
- And in the Psalms: Psalm 118:22 'It was the stone rejected by the builders that became the cornerstone.' And Psalm 22:1 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?'

So, when Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, he helped them to see that what happened to him was not contrary to the Scriptures but consistent with them. You can legitimately say that the Scriptures foretold him.

In a similar way you can find our own story in the Scriptures; you are not mentioned in the Bible. But when you read the Scriptures in the light of your own experiences, you can find your issues, your struggles, your hopes. You can find yourself in the Scriptures.

Maybe you can find yourself in today's Gospel, perhaps in those words of Jesus: 'Why are you so agitated? And why are these doubts rising in your hearts?'

Is Jesus speaking these words to you at this moment? Are you feeling a bit agitated about something? Are their doubts rising in your heart in recent times?

Perhaps you need to hear the risen Jesus say to you, 'It is I indeed. I am here. I am with you.'

The Scriptures comfort and challenge us because in them we encounter the risen Christ and our own stories all intertwined. They are sacred because the story of Jesus and our own personal stories are sacred. May we always be alert to those moments when our hearts burn within us as we engage the sacred texts.

Fr Michael Goonan SSP