



**Re-establish  
our faith  
on the foundation of  
the Risen Christ  
who WALKS  
to EMMAUS**

**Vichara Dhara**

**47**

# Easter Reflections

[This is continuation of the Easter Reflection, 'The Risen Christ is One who WALKS'  
(Vichara Dhara 46)]

## Re-establish our faith on the foundation of The Risen Christ who WALKS to EMMAUS

*“That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, ..... Jesus himself drew near and went with them.....”. “As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them. But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, .....”. “And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.” “Then he said to them, “These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.....”*

*“Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,.....”*

*Luke 24: 13 – 49. (RSV)*

The impact that the encounter the two followers had with the Risen Christ, is well encapsulated in the verse, “And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them.” Lk 24: 33. It must have been quite late at night. It was not simply the fact that they saw the Risen Lord, that enthused them to return to Jerusalem ‘the same hour’ itself. But the new light they got, on the ‘things that happened’ in those days. That is, on the Crucifixion and the Resurrection.

### 1. ‘Outsiders’ preach the Good News to the ‘Chosen Ones’

The two followers rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them. The two told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. Luke 24: 33-35. What the two told the eleven and

the others, was not just the fact of the rising up of the Lord from the dead but the spiritual truth of the continuity of the crucified body and hence the continuity of the Lord’s Mission and His way.

**Two ‘outsiders’ who were not part of the twelve, were given the great privilege of proclaiming to the ‘twelve’ that their Master was living!**

*The two ‘fools’ who through their amazing encounter with the Lord on*

***the road to Emmaus, became 'wise'. They succeeded in understanding the events. They were chosen to proclaim the great message. The twelve had been chosen 'to be with him, and to be sent out to preach' Mark 3: 14 (RSV). But one of them betrayed him and the others ran away at the most critical moment. So, most significantly, the greatest message, "the Crucified One is risen", was 'preached' to them by two 'outsiders'!***

***This is repeated in history. Those who are chosen to be witnesses to the Truth, and called to preach the 'Good News' miserably, sadly, fail to do it and they are preached to, the great message about the Resurrection of the Crucified One and His continuing activity!***

## **2. They did not believe!**

Luke does not explicitly record the response of the eleven to the words of the two from Emmaus. They must not have listened to them carefully. They must not have taken their words very seriously. Though Luke does not make any explicit mention of it, significantly, Mark does it.

***It must have been referring to this incidence, Mark records, "After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them." Mark 16: 12, 13.***

## **3. The Risen One had to confront them too**

It must be clearly understood that what was problematic for the eleven and those who had assembled there, was not the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. They themselves knew well that their Master Jesus, during his public ministry, had raised a few from the dead. At least

some of them must have been witnesses to the raising of Lazarus who was dead for four days. John 11: 39. So it was not absolutely unbelievable for them that God would have raised His Son from the dead! But what was not possible at all for them to comprehend was that the Risen One would have the continuity of his body. **In other words, the continuity of his Mission and the Way. And as Mark records, "They did not believe them".**

It was the same problem that the two followers who walked to Emmaus faced. The two followers said to Jesus that they had believed that he would redeem Israel. What was it that happened in between? The Cross. They could not believe at all that the Cross, the way of the Cross, would lead to the redemption of Israel. The military and might, arms and force would redeem Israel. How could the Cross? Again, they could not imagine at all that the Risen Lord would walk as a very ordinary, totally unrecognizable man! Had he come in chariot and in glory, the two would have easily recognized. The Risen Master had to open their eyes. Luke 24: 21. Here too, the eleven and the others did not believe.

***It is at this crucial moment, the Risen Lord chose to confront them. "As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them. But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts?"***

## **4. A spiritual lesson of great value**

It is important to note that though the eleven had walked with the Master for three years and the Master himself

had told them about his resurrection, those things did not enable them to believe what the two 'followers' told them. John records in the Gospel that he wrote, what Thomas said bluntly, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe." John 20: 24, 25.

***In spite of the life together with the Master for three years, they did not grow in faith to believe in the witness of the two followers. It is a spiritual lesson of great value. And we need to remind ourselves of that always. And the Lord Himself painfully asked, Why are you alarmed? "Why are those doubts?" Lk 24: 29 (TEV). There was a clear reason for their 'alarm' and 'doubts'!***

### **5. That question has to be understood differently**

In spite of his words, "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see", they 'still disbelieved'. Lk. 24: 41. Then the Risen Lord asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?" LK 24: 41(TEV). It was not just an act of proving to them the fact of the bodily resurrection, as it is commonly understood. They found it absolutely incomprehensible that the Risen Lord would ask such a thing, "Have you anything here to eat?" **It was not a ceremonial begging!** "They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them." Luke 24: 41- 43. Even in their wild imaginations they could not think that the Risen Lord would be hungry and ask for something to eat. It transcended all their capacity for comprehension. **Through the act of the sharing of the fish, the Risen Lord was proving to them, in a language they understood well, that he would be always with them.**

***The eleven had been chosen 'to be with him'. They were terribly afraid that the cross had robbed their Master off from them, separated him from them. Now, through that simple act, the most eloquent to any living being, the Risen Christ was assuring them that he would continue to be with them. It is powerfully expressed in the words, "And I will be with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28: 20 (TEV).***

### **6. A continuing question to all the disciples**

At another level, this asking for 'anything to eat?' must have aroused in them the consciousness of the stark reality of hunger.

Interpreting and understanding it in metaphysical terms alone is not sufficient. Just prior to the feeding of the five thousand, the Master told them, "You yourselves give them something to eat." Mark 6: 37 (TEV).

The first thing that the Lord asked His disciples, after His Resurrection, was to give Him something to eat.

***Amidst other vexing concerns, alarming realities, the Risen Master woke them up to the reality of hunger, through that question. The Risen Lord continues to ask all his disciples, "Have you anything to eat?" and puts on them the inalienable responsibility of responding to all those who raise that cry. Through that 'begging', "Have you anything here to eat?", the Risen Lord proved to them the truth of the bodily resurrection of their Master. Not only that. More importantly, he unequivocally, conveyed to them that he would be with them in their hunger and thirst, concerns and worries. And that 'hunger' and 'thirst' were, still his issues. And worldly burdens and***

***bodily passions had not become unknown to him. It was an amazing, mighty act of re-assurance to the disciples totally lost in bewilderment, confusion and despair.***

### **7. They failed to understand some invaluable truths**

Though hardly 40 sentences are used by Luke to narrate the walk to Emmaus, the interaction with the two 'followers' and the later 'encounter' with the eleven and those who had gathered there, certain amazing, invaluable truths are brought out through this short section. The first was the truth of his bodily resurrection. The second was about the fulfillment of 'the law of Moses, and the prophets and the psalms'. And, about the Mission the eleven and those who had assembled there, had to carry out. But the fact was that they failed in understanding all these.

An apparently innocuous verse declares a principle of supreme value. "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "This is what is written: the Messiah must suffer and must rise from death three days later..." Lk. 24: 45 – 49.

**Have we ever cared to stop and think for a while, whose mind was it that the Risen Master opened? It is a question very seldom asked and pondered over!**

Those who had gathered there were the eleven, and those who had followed him, and who had still shown the commitment to their crucified Master. The eleven were those who had been chosen by him 'to be with him' and 'to preach the good news'. In spite of their walking with him for three years their mind was not open enough to

understand what had happened 'in those days', as it was in the case of the two who walked to 'Emmaus'. All their work, their preaching when they were sent out two by two, their healing miracles, their participation in their Master's ministry....all these did not help them to understand what had been fulfilled in those days!

***It should be unmistakably understood that ordinary mind, this world's mind, cannot comprehend the Cross. To comprehend the Cross and his 'way', our mind has to be 'opened'. Only if we have a new 'mind', a new 'logic', a new way of thinking, a new reasoning, we will be able to follow what was fulfilled in the Cross. Their worldly way of understanding, this world's logic, did not help them to comprehend all these. The eleven and all those who had gathered there needed a new 'way of comprehension'.***

### **8. This world's mind cannot understand the way of the Cross**

Now also, this is what is happening. The 'disciples', the church and all who are 'gathered' try to understand the Risen Lord through the 'mind', the eyes and the logic of this world. And they would, no doubt, fail. And in fact, they are failing.

**And what happens is the rejection of the Cross and 'the way' of the Crucified Christ. And that is exactly what we see around.**

### **9. Fled Not from the Master But from the Cross**

'The eleven and those who were with them' were terribly sad and shaken with the crucifixion and death of their Master. No doubt, they were still emotionally attached to him. That is why, they, even

after the crucifixion, gathered together. Undoubtedly, in the ordinary language, they 'had given their heart' to their Master Jesus. It should be noted well that even after 'all the disciples forsook him and fled', Mathew 26: 56, they themselves gathered together and kept on weeping.

**It clearly declares their emotional attachment to their Master and also the fact of 'giving their heart to the Lord'. They had not fled from their Master but only from the cross.**

Then, the Risen Lord, standing in the midst of the eleven and the others said to them, "..... everything written about me..... must be fulfilled".

**No, the eleven, even then, could not believe that 'everything written about him' would be fulfilled that way. Even at that stage the eleven refused to believe. Rather, they found it absolutely impossible to comprehend it.**

*"Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures."*  
**Luke 24: 25.**

## **10. How can we?**

If it was impossible even for the chosen eleven who had walked with him, who had been taught by him, who had witnessed the miracles, to comprehend the way of the Cross and the cry for bread, how can we believers who live two thousand years away and in a radically different economic, socio-political and religious context?

***But it must happen. The Risen Lord would intervene and would act.***

## **11. The present time**

It was extremely difficult for the disciples to open their mind to the cross at the time of the Roman Empire. It is all the more difficult at this time. This is not an ordinary time.

**The present time is decisively shaped by, at least, two things: The 'Money is on the Throne'. The 'World is Flat'.**

## **12. The Ascent of Money**

Niall Ferguson, 'one of Britain's most renowned historians and Professor of History at Harvard University' has published a book which is described as 'extraordinarily timely'. The title of the book is 'The Ascent of Money'.

**Dr. Ferguson writes in that book, "If the last four millennia had witnessed the ascent of man the thinker, we now seemed to be living through the ascent of man the banker". We are living at a time when the 'Money' is on the 'throne'. Significantly, he observes in that book, we have come to live in a world where most money is invisible. So we are living in a world where the Money is on the Throne but at the same time this is invisible.**

***Our thoughts and practices, attitudes and aspirations are all determined by 'Money' but at the same we fail to recognize that. Unknowingly, we are serving, rather worshipping, 'Money 'who' is on the Throne'.***

## **13. How to open our mind when the 'Money is on the Throne'?**

**A very important question is how to 'open our mind' to the Risen Christ who walks to Emmaus as a very ordinary person, at a time when the Money is, in every way, 'ruling' us.**

At the time of Jesus, Caesar was on the throne. And Jesus preached, 'the kingdom of God is at hand'. It meant that the reign of Caesar would end and the reign of God would begin. The grave issue for the disciples was how to 'dethrone' Caesar. For them to dethrone

'Caesar', what should have been done was to match and subdue the power of Caesar with army and swords. True, Jesus boldly preached against Caesar. **But instead of matching and overcoming the power of Caesar, he let them to catch him and to crucify him.**

That was the major issue for the disciples. They had given their 'hearts' but they refused to open themselves to the power of the Cross. They were not convinced that the Roman Empire could be defeated with the cross. And they continued to shut their mind to the way of the cross.

*The Risen Christ himself had to appear before them and encounter them. And had to open their mind.*

#### **14. Money and the Way of the Cross**

Now too, at this time when the money is on the throne, the church and most of the followers, very strongly believe that to 'dethrone' Money, we need to have the clout, the power of money. A close examination of their preaching and practice would reveal that they do not believe in the way of the Cross – of loss, poverty, suffering and sacrifice.

*While pretending that we worship God, we are, actually, worshipping 'Money' and its power and kneeling before it! And obeying its dictates! No doubt, the Risen Christ is, now too, encountering us and asking us to open our mind to the power of the Cross, and to the faith in the way of the Cross. Do we see him in front of us? Do we hear his voice around us?*

#### **15. How 'to open our mind' when the 'World is Flat'**

The second defining aspect of the present times is that the world has become 'flat'. We have moved over from a round world to a 'flat' world! The world is changing; the future is 'flat'. The three-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Thomas L. Friedman, has written a book 'The World is Flat'. It is about the globalized world in the 21st century. The Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz says about this book, "It makes you see things in a new way".

In a flattened world, Knowledge, Information Technology, Nano-Technology, Genetic Engineering and the like, are the real sources of power (Please read Alvin Toffler's book Power Shift). In a digital world, when everything is converted into a set of numbers, we may be at a total loss to discover the essential message of the Cross.

*Against the multi-digit numbers, what is the value of zero, the Cross? Does zero have a value at all? Does the Cross mean anything at all?*

*How do advanced phases of science and technology impact on the way of the Cross? In the dazzling glitter of the 'Flat World', the 'Information Age', 'Nano-Technology Phase' and 'Genetic Engineering Feats' do we lose the way of the Cross? Are we, still, willing to open our mind to the Cross?*

*The most important question before us who are living at a time when the 'World is Flat' and 'the Money is on the Throne' is, are we willing and able*

*to follow the Master on the way of the Cross? Are we willing to 'open our mind'? And to embrace the Cross?*

### **16. The obvious is not well-understood!**

“Experience has taught us not to assume that the obvious is well-understood”, wrote Paulo Freire, one of the greatest educational philosophers and practitioners, in his book, ‘Cultural Action for Freedom’.

*This is very true about our reading of Luke’s critically significant narrative of the Risen Christ’s walk to Emmaus, his long interactions with the two ‘followers’ who walked to Emmaus, his encounter with the eleven and all those*

*who had ‘gathered’ in Jerusalem and of his most important act of ‘opening up their minds’.*

### **17. The crucial question to all disciples of all times**

The narratives, in the 21st chapter of the Gospel according to Luke, are decisively important in our faith journey, in our discipleship. This is not just one chapter of that Gospel, nor is it merely the final chapter of that Gospel. But most importantly, it raises the crucial question to all disciples of all times. “Are you willing to open your mind – to open your mind to the Cross and to follow the Master along the way of the Cross?”

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Re-establish our faith**

**Re-understand and participate:** We need to re-understand the Resurrection and participate in the continuing Mission of the Risen Christ, from the position and perspective of Jesus’ question, words and actions narrated in that chapter. For Luke, what is narrated in that chapter is the culmination of the Gospel. **There he declared, in unmistakable words and totally tearing down the disciples’ expectations, that the Risen Christ is one who walks with two ‘fools’.** The vision that the Risen Christ is one who walks just like another person, unrecognized by fellow-‘walkers’, would necessitate a radical re-examination of our faith. That he did not deal with them with power and authority, that he did not punish them for their fleeing and failure, but painfully walked and explained to them the scriptures and what the prophets had said, would demand a new, radically different understanding of the Lordship of Jesus, his Mission that is entrusted to us and the Way we are called to follow.

***The great fact that all of the followers – the two who walked to Emmaus, the eleven and all those who had gathered in Jerusalem – totally failed to recognize him at first reveals to us a truth of eternal value - a truth about human nature.***

**The witness of the early church:** The historical fact is that those were not merely Luke’s narratives; those were the faith affirmations of the early church, a church that strove hard to follow the Risen Christ along the way of the Cross and of those who paid the cost for living that faith.



What is described in the 24th chapter is also the witness of those first generation Christians. They are also admitting themselves their failure in recognizing the Risen Christ in that fashion. And declaring their willingness to follow the Lord on the Way of the Cross.

## Who is, for us, the Risen Christ, our Lord?

Even when he drew himself near to them and walked with them,  
he was not recognized by the two followers  
because he was in ordinary clothes and not in shining attires!  
He was walking on foot and not riding on horse!  
When he appeared before the eleven, they did not recognize him  
because he begged for food and  
he did not go with crown on his head and sword in his hands!

This world's eyes cannot see him!  
This world's logic cannot comprehend him.  
We need to have new 'eyes' and new 'ways' of thinking.

Our meditations on the Resurrection of our Lord  
should lead us to a new Spirituality,  
to the Spirituality of the Cross. ■

– Mammen Varkey

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