

3rd Sunday Easter (A)

- Elvis Presley sang a song that had in its chorus – “*stop, look & listen*”.
- Admittedly it was concerning something other than what I’d like to focus on, but I thought of those words in the context of where we are in our life’s journey.
- There are at times unbidden, often disastrous, sometimes tragic events that occur in our lives that cause us to stop us dead in our tracks, but the temptation is to get on with our lives, to busy ourselves, to avoid wrestling with the impact on us, to not face the grief, to numb the pain in any way we can, & resist stopping.
- With the pandemic impacting the lives of the global community, we have the same temptation – not to stop, but look at how we do what we have been doing before with the clever use of technological hardware, & wait to get back to do what we have done before, maybe having learnt a few things to work more effectively & efficiently.
- But maybe what we’re missing is **truly** stopping, looking & listening, so that we might be changed, & for the better.
- This ANZAC weekend is an example of how we annually stop, look & listen to the dedication of service women & men in the past who have sacrificed their lives for their homeland.
- But have we as a nation & as a global community adequately learnt how to interact differently with others who are not of my nation or group, or religion so that in remembering our forebears who fought for freedom, we might change to strive for liberty, justice & peace in non-violent ways?
- How are we in the Church & the world stopping, looking & listening in the event of this pandemic to find new ways of being Christian & of relating to others & our world in new ways?
- In the Church we are busying ourselves trying to replicate the old ways of doing things, like celebrating the Eucharist in this virtual way over cyber-space, but this is really quite unsatisfactory, both for you & for me, but until we can think of some better ways, I will continue it as a way of connecting with you.
- But maybe we are on the verge of discovering that our Christianity needs to be deepened & not just be recipients of something celebrated by a priest.
- Karl Rahner, one of the greatest theologians of the last century, stated that “the Christian of the future will be a mystic or will not exist at all”.
- I think he was implying that we become more attuned to encountering God in the mundane, ordinary things & events in life, & that we become more active in responding to the encounters, rather than believing that we just encounter God in the sacred, religious activities in which we can be tempted to just be recipients.
- The Eucharist is certainly fundamental in our lives, but we are only truly responsive if it constantly changes us & attunes us to encountering God in the ordinary, & then doing our bit in deepening our relationship with God in ways that makes a difference to how we live our lives.
- Today we reflect on life as a journey, this time in the Gospel played out in the remarkable story of the disciples walking towards a town called Emmaus.
- They are stopped not just by the despairing event of the ignoble execution of their leader, teacher & master, but also on this road by their encounter with a stranger

who stops them in their tracks of thinking & behaving, & through their looking & listening, they are forever changed, so much so, that they become bearers of a new message & a new way of seeing reality.

- We're invited to join them in their encounter with the risen Christ so that we might be changed.
- This theme expresses well the fact that life is not static, but is a movement from one point to another.
- Actually, we do not so much make the journey as we join one that is already in progress. Nor are we alone on it.
- Like the two disciples travelling to Emmaus, we have certain expectations which Jesus does not seem to fulfil.
- They did not realise that through his death he had accomplished everything.
- They did not realise that the Risen Lord himself was their travelling companion. As with them, so with us.
- We may not see the extraordinary in the ordinary.
- We may not see the hand of God in our lives.
- Perhaps we need someone to interpret for us both the tradition of our Faith & the events of life.
- Despite appearances, something is happening beneath what we are able to observe. God is at work beneath & within our lives.
- Luke reminds his community, who are like us, that even though they, like us, are prevented from seeing Jesus, they can still have a life-changing experience of his presence.
- The disciples are on a journey of faith & Jesus meets them where they are, as they are. This is a critical detail in the story.
- Jesus listens to their expectations, hopes & disappointments & only after they have expressed the reality of their situation, does Christ open the scriptures to them.
- In doing so he takes their disillusionment & enables them to see the connections with the story of salvation. This leads them to hope.
- Even then, they do not recognise who Jesus is until he breaks the bread & in that action he is revealed as the one in whom they had been hoping.
- This experience drives them back to Jerusalem to witness to the power of Christ's resurrection.
- The Emmaus story teaches us that Jesus firstly wants to listen to us before he wants us to listen to Him.
- Christ opens the scriptures to us each week so that we can make sense of our experience, see the ways in which God is present & absent & recognise our own foolishness.
- At this time of the pandemic, we are invited to encounter the risen Christ in our social isolation.
- We're invited to share with Christ in prayer, our story of disappointment, fears & disillusionment & ask him to listen to us.
- How can you stop, look & listen to the Christ who brings new life to change you to become an even better human & Christian?
- How can you do your bit for the future coming of Christ's Kingdom.