

Homily The Third Sunday of Easter 2026

'Lang may yer lum reek!', is an affectionate greeting in Scotland. It means literally, 'Long may your chimney smoke!'. It is rich in deeper significance. It wishes the recipient, a house which has a roaring fire, especially in hard times. A fire which gives warmth, light, energy and indeed life. It wishes the person a happy, joyful and peaceful home, a desirable place where the person enjoys companionship and conviviality.

On Easter Day Jesus appears to the disciples in the Upper Room and greets them, 'Shalom!' (Peace be with you). Eight days later, with Thomas now present, he again appears greeting them 'Shalom!' and probably on the Emmaus Road also greeted the two disciples with 'Shalom!' Like 'Lang matter lum reek!' 'Shalom!' is more than simply a greeting of peace. (Shalom" (שָׁלוֹם) comes from the root ש-ל-ם (Sh-L-M),) and carries the idea of wholeness, completeness, harmony (mental and emotional wellbeing), right relationship with others, a sense that life is as it should be. As well as personal wellbeing 'Shalom' wishes community harmony, justice and fairness. Above all it wishes the recipients harmony, peace with God and neighbour and spiritual completeness. It is, in short, a blessing from God.

In Acts 2, today's First Reading, St Peter addresses the crowds on The Day of Pentecost and greets them, 'Shalom!' He then goes on to explain how Jesus, whom they crucified out of ignorance, was raised from the dead in order that the Holy Spirit be poured out bringing them perfect peace, wholeness and right relationship with God and their fellow men. It is The Holy Spirit who is the 'bearer' of 'Shalom'

In today's Second Reading from 1 Letter of Peter, we are reminded that this wholeness, this completeness and this positive relationship with God has been made possible because, we 'were ransomed, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.' It is therefore, Jesus' salvific act which guarantees 'Shalom'.

In The Gospel of Luke, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus do not recognise the person who greets them until Jesus breaks bread at the Eucharistic Meal. It is only then, the two men suddenly recognise the fullness of God's gift bestowed on them by Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection. It is only then they acknowledge, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?'

Like the two Emmaus disciples we, on our journey through life, join Jesus at The Eucharistic Meal each Sunday. At Mass do WE really recognise Jesus, in 'the breaking of the bread,'? Do WE really believe Jesus, through his Passion Death and Resurrection, frees us from sin and death and makes our lives complete and meaningful? Do OUR hearts burn within us as The Word of God is proclaimed and explained In The Liturgy of The Word? Do we receive the Easter greeting of 'Shalom!' with an open heart and mind, doing all WE can to live out God's wish in harmony and peace with God and our neighbour?

It is in embracing these beliefs that, 'Lang may yer lum reek!' will also become a reality. How stunningly beautiful is that?