

And Their Eyes Were Opened

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Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. *Luke 24:30-31*

Many times throughout our lives we can ask in prayer, “Lord, let my eyes be opened.” There are so many things that the Lord can show us that are different from our natural impressions. Two people can look at exactly the same situation and see very different things. Some people can respond to an important issue that is not going well reacting with sadness, anger and impatience. Other people can face almost the same situation and react with hope, energy and a wise patience. The first group of people can look at their lives and see mostly faults, flaws and disappointments. The second group can be well aware that they are not perfect but also sees so many ways in which the Lord has been blessing them and their efforts. For the first group of people the Lord is absent or seems unwilling or incapable of helping. For the second group of people the foundation of their lives is the belief that working together with the Lord guarantees good things in the long-run.

We know that being told about something and understanding it are two very different things. The Lord had tried to prepare His disciples for the events of Good Friday and the first Easter. He had spoken of His death and resurrection several times. But the disciples still were not prepared for its actuality. Even the first news of the Lord’s resurrection was not accepted by largely blinded states of mind of His disciples.

It is an amazing and wonderful image to think of the two disciples traveling to Emmaus saying to the Lord, “Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?” (*Luke 24:18*) They thought they knew what had happened and He didn’t. But they were wrong. Their eyes were so closed that they didn’t even recognize who it was that was walking and talking with them. It wasn’t until the Lord said a prayer at supper, broke bread, and gave it to them that they finally recognized with whom they had been traveling.

The act by the Lord of breaking bread and giving to these two men has a long and deep background. Concerning it we read the following:

[I]n the Ancient Church bread was broken when it was given to another, by which action was meant the sharing of what was one's own and the passing of good from oneself to another to be his own. Thus it meant making love mutual. For when someone breaks bread and gives it to another he is sharing with him what is his own. Or when a loaf is broken and shared among many, the single loaf becomes one shared mutually by all, and all are consequently joined together through charity. From this it is evident that the breaking of bread was a sign that meant mutual love. (*Arcana Caelestia 5404:1-2*)

One of the fundamental messages that the Lord would lead us to recognize is that this passing of good things from oneself to another, that is, expressions of goodwill and wise kindness are a

prerequisite for us to really understand the Lord and the things He would teach us. Prior to a our living a life with true charity at its core, there are many things that we can learn but will inevitably not understand. It is like the disciples walking and talking with the Lord and not even knowing with whom they were speaking.

The Lord came into the world that we might have life and have it more abundantly. He came to teach us all in a way that could not have been accomplished by the mouth of prophets or some human writer. He came also to give us an example of the kind of wisely loving life that He wants us to follow.

One of the great and powerful ideas of the New Church is that He also was born into the world to make sure that each of us has the freedom to choose the life we want to lead. He is our Savior and Redeemer because through His life, death, and resurrection He has ensured that there is a powerful force drawing each of us upwards toward heaven. He ensured that He can bring to our minds the kind of ideas that we need to make better and wiser choices. His life allows us to feel the joy of wisely caring for the people around us.

The revelation of truth that the good news of Easter represents is not a matter of deep intellect as it is normally defined. Instead it is the basis of clear wisdom, trust and a deep inner peace. This idea is conveyed in the following teaching for the New Church, beloved by many.

Peace is . . . like the dawn on earth, which fills people's minds with overall delight. And the truth of peace is like the light of dawn. This truth which is being called the truth of peace is the Divine Truth itself present in heaven and coming from the Lord; it influences all there without exception, and causes heaven to be heaven. Peace holds within itself trust in the Lord, the trust that He governs all things and provides all things, and that He leads toward an end that is good. When a person believes these things about Him he is at peace, since he fears nothing and no anxiety about things to come disturbs him. How far a person attains this state depends on how far he attains love to the Lord. (*Arcana Caelestia* 8455)

This is further described in the following:

The truth of peace is Divine Truth that goes forth from the Lord and is present in heaven. This being inmost, it introduces itself into the truth underneath it and gives it life, as dew usually enlivens grass or crops on which it settles in the morning. When the truth underneath is given life by it the truth of peace goes up; that is, it no longer seems to be there; only the truth that has received life from it is to be seen. This is how the truth of faith is born; for no truth contained in doctrine or in the Word becomes a truth residing with a person until it has received life from the [Lord]. It receives that life through the introduction of truth that goes forth from the Lord, called the truth of peace. This truth is not the truth of faith; rather it is the life or soul of the truth of faith. It organizes into a heavenly form everything within the truth which is called the truth of faith, and also after that the truths themselves in relation to each other. All this goes to show what happens when the introduction of truth by means of the truth of peace takes place in a person. (*Arcana Caelestia* 8456)

The joy of Easter morning is the joy of newly seen truth. We, during our lives in this world, will have many times when we do not understand why things have happened as they have. We will have times when we may wonder about the Lord's care for us, for someone near and dear to us or for some cause or effort in this world that we believe to be vitally important. Our state of mind can be like the two disciples that the Lord joined as they walked to Emmaus. They thought that the Lord was gone forever and all that He had tried to accomplish had died with Him. The Lord looked at them and asked, "'What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?' (Luke 24:17) We like the disciples might be inclined to say, 'Don't you know what has happened?'" The Lord invites us to speak to Him in prayer of our doubts and concerns and He invites us to listen as He responds, bringing to mind ideas that perhaps we first heard in childhood. But above all He calls us to do what we can to live a life of mutual love. We might be inclined to say to Him, "But you don't know how hard it is to love this or that person." But even as we think about our experience with trying to wisely love this difficult person, perhaps our minds can be reminded of the people He faced during His life in this world. How even as He was being crucified He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34)

May the joy of Easter come to us many times over in our lives. May our eyes be opened to see the Lord and the life He calls us to lead. Day by day we can seek to live the life of wise kindness to others. In ways large and small we can seek to foster the welfare of others directly and indirectly. Through this effort the Lord will over and over again open our eyes to see more clearly. He will lead us to understand ourselves more accurately and with wise compassion. We will understand the people around us more accurately and with wise compassion. We will have that foundation trust that all things that happen can lead to a better life for us and those we love.

May we give the Lord thanks for His loving care. May we wonder at His patience and strength. May the joy of Easter be ours. AMEN.

Lessons: *Luke 24:13-35, Arcana Caelestia 3863:14-15*

Luke 24:13-35

Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?"

Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?"

And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that

they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see." 25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

Arcana Caelestia 3863:14-15

It happened, when Jesus was at table with them, that He took the bread and said a blessing, and broke it and gave to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him. Luke 24:30, 31.

The meaning of this event was that the Lord comes into sight through a concern for what is good, but not through truth devoid of that concern for what is good; for "bread" means the good affections that come from love. From these and many other places it is clear that "seeing" in the internal sense means faith received from the Lord, for no other faith exists which is truly faith except faith which comes from the Lord. This is also the faith that enables a person to see, that is, to believe. But faith originating in self or from what is a person's own life is not truly faith, for it causes him to see false ideas as true ones and true ideas as false ones; or if he does see truths as truths he does not truly see them because he does not believe them. For in them he sees himself and not the Lord.

That "seeing" means possessing faith in the Lord is quite evident from what has been stated often about the light of heaven, namely that because it flows from the Lord the light of heaven holds intelligence and wisdom within it, and so holds faith in Him since faith in the Lord is inwardly present in intelligence and wisdom. Consequently seeing by that light, as angels do, can mean nothing else than faith in the Lord. The Lord Himself too is within that light because it proceeds from Him. That light is also the light which shines within the conscience of those who possess faith in Him, though no one is directly conscious of its doing so as long as he lives in the body, for during that time the light of the world is obscuring that light.