

Easter Homily:  
"SEEING, YET NOT PERCEIVING".  
Scripture lesson, Luke 24:13-49

The Gospel account of Luke has several distinctives: it is written by an educated physician, not a peasant fisherman. Uniquely, Luke proclaim Christ the Messiah to be 'Lord of all', so in his second report, The Acts of the Apostles, he reports the defiance of the apostle Paul in the several court trials he is subjected to. Luke alone reports the two disciples travelling to Emmaus after the crucifixion of Jesus, so was he one of the two disciples? As a physician/lawyer, Luke as a man for the evidence to be convinced, as Jesus opened up the promises of Scripture. (Luke 24:45) . Only Luke connects the ascension of Jesus, with the ascension of Elijah the prophet in the Old Testament. But while Elijah defied the priests of Baal, Jesus blessed those that accepted the evidence of the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms.(Lk. 24:44)

It was the understanding that perception requires the correlate of conception, that navigated my early researches as a doctorate students. I then learned to appreciate the mystical poet Hogarth of the 17<sup>th</sup>. cen. who speaks of "conceiving with the mind, to then see through the eye".

I then applied this principle when I was elected by the Royal Geographical Society of Great Society in London, to be one of two delegates to the International Geographical Union, to investigate the perception of hazards, i.e. floods and earthquakes. My colleague Kenneth Hare was a climatologist, who later became President of the University of British Columbia, who the enabled Regent College to become an affiliate college.

Our international delegation was invited in 1968 to be the guest of the chief seismologist of California, and travel along the San Andres Faultline. We were shocked to be informed of the number of hospitals, including the HQ of the Red Cross all on the fault lines. Then his assistance amused me privately to whisper that had house had his home also on the Faultline. Why? Because he had a beautiful view from its precipitous site. Flood hazard was easily perceived. Learn the river gradient's profile, and the hydrological cycle that the housing developer knew. Immediately after a flood with low land value, the developer would buy the land cheaply, build on the flood plain, and move away until the next flood 15-20 years later. Like our Lord's parable of building on the rock and not the sand, greed is blind to perception.

What's this got to do with the story of Jesus' walk with the two sad disciples going home to Emmaus, you may ask?

The same principle holds that perception is blinded without conception. In spite of Jesus foretelling his death and resurrection, the disciples still found it inconceivable that He would rise again from the dead. Even when they had already seen how the daughter of Jairus, then Lazarus, were both raised from the death.

So too, with us. We have had our personal baptism, as risen from the dead. Yet how radically has this changed our lives? Is it only a free ticket for church

membership, without a paradigm shift or *metanoia* experience? My colleague Jen Zimmerman and I, edited a book, SOURCES OF CHRISTIAN IDENTITY, around the *metanoia* experiences of great leaders of the Church, such as Augustine, Dante, Luther, Calvin and later leaders.

### **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE.**

Our personal baptism, should be like it was to these saints, a *metanoia* experience with each one of us, not just a ticket for church membership. Now heightening our tensions is the outbreak of the CVD pandemic. It is an opportunity for a radical change in our way of life, as it was for the early Christians. As one epidemic of disease followed another, the early Christians grew rapidly in numbers, not by evangelism, but by the pagans seeing how they cared both for them and for their house churches. For the ancients had no idea what caused epidemics, as Ps. 91 expresses it:

“You will not fear the terror of night,  
nor the arrow that flies by day,  
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,  
nor the plague that destroys at midday.  
A thousand may fall at your side,  
Ten thousand at your right hand,  
But it will not come near you”. (Ps. 91: 5-7)

With this assurance, the early Christians nursed each other, even giving their lives to nurse pagan neighbors. “See how these Christians love one another” became the public acclaim, whereas pagan families fled from their homes to leave their infested family members to perish. As the scholar Rodney Stark points out in his book, *The Rise of Christianity*, Christians outgrew in numbers their pagan enemies, so that by the time of the emperor Constantine, the Roman world had become a Christian world. He could no longer rule as a pagan emperor, whether his conversion was sincere or just ‘political’.

### **HOW THEN DOES THIS EASTER CHANGE OUR LIVES?**

I leave this question to haunt us all. Pray about it, think about it constantly.