

## of Easter

The Easter message of hope and faith has never been easily grasped, not from the first. That first Easter was a day of fears, tears, perplexities and doubts. The disciples were still in the grip of the shattering events of Good Friday. They had seen their Master spat upon, scourged, crowned with thorns. He had been crucified between two thieves. A spear had been thrust into His side. He had not raised a hand to save Himself. Nor had He saved them from their worst selves. One of them had betrayed Him; another had denied Him. So much for their dreams of glory.

That first Easter Sunday the demoralized disciples, now eleven, huddled together behind closed doors in fear of the Jews, mourning the dead Christ. When the thunderous news of the Resurrection was brought to them by the women who had gone to anoint the body of Jesus, they turned a deaf ear. The words of the women, St. Luke tells us, seemed to them "like idle tales and they believed them not."

And that same first Easter the risen Christ fell in with two of the disciples on their way to Emmaus. They failed to recognize the stranger to whom they told their tale of woe. "But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel," they reported aggrievedly of their crucified King.

"O fools and slow of heart," Christ reproached them, as He has had occasion to reproach men ever since. And since then, men who have become convinced of the truth of the Redemption seem to believe only half of the story. There are those who have dwelt morbidly on the suffering and seen only the death on the Cross without its transcendent love. And there are others who have seized on the triumph of Easter Sunday as a guarantee of happy endings for every day in every way, without relation to steadfast Christian hope.

One should weigh the full message Christ gave to the bewildered disciples on the road to Emmaus: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" It is that glorious message, and its truth that we celebrate today.