



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM

Office for Ethnic Chaplaincies and Eastern Catholic Churches
Co-ordinator: Monsignor Daniel McHugh

“Make Our Hearts Burn Within Us”

Reflection for the 3rd Sunday of Easter

19 April 2026

Mgr Daniel McHugh

“He was made known to them in the breaking of bread.” (Luke 24:35)

I am writing this Reflection in the week when Pope Leo XIV has begun his Apostolic Journey to Africa starting in Algeria and moving on to Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea. Before setting out on this pastoral visit, Pope Leo had led a world-wide Day of Prayer for Peace with a special service in St Peter's. We are conscious in these days of the fractured state of the world with countries at war and major powers involved, in particular Pope Leo's own homeland, the United States. Pope Leo has pointed to the teaching of Our Lord “Blessed are the Peacemakers” in the context of prayer for Peace in Iran. He may not have expected this to be the situation when the Apostolic Visit was planned some time ago, but he would have known that part of his



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time in Algeria would be given to prayer at the Shrine of the 19 Algerian Martyrs whose lives were taken in the 1990s when there was civil war in Algeria and Christians suffered at the hands of radical Islamists. I recall some time ago on a holiday in Morocco going to the Atlas Mountains and encountering one of the Trappist Monks, whose Community suffered martyrdom in their monastery, also in the Atlas Mountains but in Algeria. Pope Leo praised the witness of Algeria's Christian Martyrs at a meeting with local Catholics. The story of the Martyrs whose Feast Day comes up on 7 May is well worth reading: you can see Catholic Christian People chose to stay on in Algeria despite the danger they were in; you can see too their love of the land and its people as they chose to live out the way of love and peace as the small Catholic Community there today does. The Pope described the Church's role in Algeria as a "discrete and precious presence."

The people in Cameroon will be awaiting Pope Leo, who is taking leave of Algeria as I write this reflection (Wednesday 15 April). The Cameroonian Community here in the Archdiocese is praying for the success of the Pope's visit to their homeland. They play an important part in the wider Catholic Community here; taking a significant part in their parishes and through their Chaplaincy enriching Diocesan liturgical occasions especially with their music, dance and traditional dress, and of course their special Cameroonian cuisine.



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This weekend across the countries being visited by Pope Leo and here in the UK the Latin/Roman Church has the Gospel account of the Risen Lord Jesus meeting 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were downcast following the death of Jesus: they thought all their hopes were at an end. Then they met a stranger – it was Jesus Himself though they did not recognise him. He entered into conversation with them and explained the passages of the Scriptures where about the Messiah – He, the Christ, would have to suffer, die and so enter into glory. It was at table when he broke bread with them that they recognised Him; He had risen from the dead. Then he disappeared from their midst and “they rose that same hour” and went to Jerusalem to tell the others what had “happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.”

Sunday Connection – the Loyola Press Commentary on the Sunday Readings – says: “In their encounter we find our model for our Liturgy of the Word – what we do each time we gather as a Community for the Eucharist. We reflect upon our life experiences and interpret them in light of Scripture. We gather together to break open the Word of God.” That is what Pope Leo is doing when he gathers his flock and speaks God’s Word in the context of present day challenges and the local context too. I am looking forward to what he will say in the Cameroon when he visits Bamenda, the centre of tensions sparked by English-speaking separatists and the Francophone-dominated government. BBC reports: It is here “the Pope will hold a Mass



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for peace and justice at the airport. Local residents hope it might act as a catalyst for reconciliation.”

The Sunday Connection Commentary continues: “In the next part of the [Gospel] story we find a model for our Liturgy of the Eucharist... In the Eucharist we too share in the breaking of the bread and discover Jesus in our midst. Just as the disciples returned to Jerusalem to recount their experience to the other disciples, we too are sent from our Eucharist gathering. Our experience of Jesus in the Eucharist compels us to share the story with others.”

This Sunday we have the joy of hearing once more the account of Jesus meeting with disciples on the Road to Emmaus. We pray that “our hearts burn within us” as we enter into the conversation and that we too will be empowered through partaking of the Body and Blood of our Lord and share the good news with others!

“He was made known to them in the breaking of bread.”