

## Sermon for Easter 3, 2020

(sermon by Fr. Ron Barnes)

The coronavirus has forced many of us to self-isolate these days. Staying at home can be pretty boring, so we find ways to relieve the alone time by going for a walk. It is a good thing to do, to enjoy the spring, to watch the leaves sprout on the trees, and to safely enjoy other's company.

The Gospel for today tells us about 2 disciples going for a walk, but it was not for company. They had seen their Lord Jesus crucified and buried. It was not only a terrible thing to see, but even more, it was the end of their dreams. They had hoped that Jesus was to be the Messiah --- He had opened their minds and hearts to a new way of growing spiritually. They had hoped that Jesus would introduce them to the Kingdom of God, whatever that meant. Now all their hopes had been dashed, with a crash, and they were walking home to resume their former life. One of them was called Cleopas; we don't know the name of the other. They had both been disciples, though not part of the inner group of 12.

These two disciples were walking towards Emmaus, a town outside of Jerusalem; that's as far as they were allowed to walk on the Sabbath. While they were talking, they were joined by another man, who walked with them.

"What are you discussing?" the stranger asked. And the two disciples told him about their hopes about Jesus, even the story that the women had told about Jesus being Resurrected, but what did women know. Dead is dead, right? Their depression was obvious to the stranger.

And then the stranger began to tell them of Moses and the prophets, and all that had been foretold in the Bible. As they listened, the stranger's understanding began to make a lot of sense. Finally, they reached the hotel where they intended to stay.

"Stay with us", they said. And the stranger did. It happened at supper. The stranger Took bread, Blessed it, Broke it, and Gave it to them. And suddenly their eyes were opened, and they knew who it was. It was Jesus. And He vanished from their sight.

“Were not our hearts burning within us, while He opened the Scriptures to us,” they exclaimed. And they ran all the way back to Jerusalem, burst into the Upper Room where the disciples were, and told them that the Risen Jesus had appeared to them, and they had recognised Him when He celebrated the Eucharist.

This is one of the best known stories of Jesus. But it is more than a story, it is an illustration of the very kernel of the Christian Faith.

The disciples had know that at the Last Supper, Jesus had given them the very basis of the Eucharist, by which He would be with them always. Now the disciples at Emmaus had experienced it. The Eucharist is at the very root of the Gospel, and without it, we can never understand the manner in which God will be with us. Did you notice that the two disciples had said “Our hearts burned within us” when Jesus explained the Scriptures. It was important to hear but the Scriptures did not bring them to Jesus, even when it was the Lord Himself who taught them. It was the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the Mass, the Communion Service that showed them Jesus, and brought them into His Presence.

And that is what the Eucharist has done every Sunday ever since. When we follow what Jesus taught --- to Take, Bless, Break, and Give the Bread and Wine (that through the Blessing has become the Body and Blood of Christ), we experience His Holy Presence and His Love. It is far more than Remembrance; it is a genuine participation in what Jesus is doing now --- offering His Perfect Sacrifice to the Father in Heaven as our Holy Worship. We today offer the Sacrifice of Christ to the Father when we celebrate the Eucharist. And then Jesus feeds us with His Grace and Presence in His Body and Blood.

The Story of the Road to Emmaus is one of the greatest stories of the Gospel. It teaches us about the Eucharist, about the Scriptures, and about the Presence of the Risen Christ with us. Alleluia, Christ is Risen; He is Risen indeed, Alleluia.

(Fr. Ron Barnes aohc)