

**Third Sunday of Easter - 2023**  
**Acts 2.14,22-23///1 Peter 1.17-21///Luke 24.13-35**

→Today's Gospel episode is the familiar tale of the Emmaus story.

→in it we hear about two of the disciples walking on the road to the village of Emmaus, some 7 miles away from Jerusalem.

→Luke tells the story with both detail and suspense, of Cleopas and his companion making their way as the sun is setting on that first Easter night.

→and as they take one step after another, with heavy hearts, a stranger comes alongside

*“talking, walking and discussing with them,”*

.....all the events that had taken place over the past few days.

→as we hear, *“it is Jesus himself but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.”*

→now that one tiny detail has always puzzled me: *how could these disciples not have recognized the Lord?*

...the one who multiplied the bread and fish, healed the sick, and held so many people in the grip of his teachings and stories.

→what was it about **this journey** that keeps them from seeing the stranger who is traveling alongside them?

→and perhaps more challenging, is that **could we, who consider ourselves**, *“people of faith”* also be as blind and, at times, not recognize the Lord when he joins us in our lives?

PAUSE

→we might laugh and chuckle....[and] maybe even wonder, because we are pretty certain that God **will always recognize us** no matter what....but this story awakens us to the opposite

reality.... that, even **though** God always recognizes us....might we sometimes fail to recognize God even when he's walking right beside us!

PAUSE

→when you consider it more closely....each one of us has our own Emmaus road that we walk....our own Emmaus journey we often take.

→by that I mean...that each one of us has some “*place*” to escape to when life becomes too difficult.

→it may be in a park or woods; to a movie or a hobby; or spending time with a good friend.

→whatever it might be...we [often] try to search out a place to escape too...

→Emmaus....was that place for these two disciples

→they could no longer deal with the traumatic events that had happened in Jerusalem, along with the stories of an empty tomb and angelic visions.

→it was too much for Cleopas and his companion to bear;

....they needed a place to escape...and so they headed towards Emmaus.

PAUSE

→Given the circumstances we sometimes face in life...we too might look for a place to escape...from our stress, anxiety, fear, and uncertainty.

→haven't we all felt discouraged at some point in life?

→[and] sadly....some have walked away from the Church and God, ....others from relationships and commitments.

PAUSE

→whatever the case may be....

→wouldn't it be interesting if a stranger started walking along side us.....giving us a **chance** to talk about what we are feeling... and then explaining why things happened the way they do?

→...this is what happens today to the disciples and same thing happens to you and me each time we gather to celebrate the Eucharist.

PAUSE

→one of the unique parallels of this story is that it is often seen as a model for the Mass.

→and a closer look at it reveals this to be true

[which is appropriate for us today, as we celebrate First Communion with our young people]

→it opens with the disciples journeying to Emmaus.

→....Jesus was to be the hope for all people, then he is killed, and now there are rumors that he is risen from the dead.

→the story proceeds to say that, "*beginning with Moses and the prophets he interprets for them all of Scripture.*"

→this is a clear connection to the beginning of Mass, the readings of Scripture and breaking open the Word.

→....next Jesus sits down at the table.

→the bread is blessed, broken and given to them.

→and the travelers then recognize Christ in their midst – a clear connection to the Eucharistic Prayer and Communion we share.

→however, what might not be so evident is that this story, not only reveals the structure of the Mass, but it also tells us something very important about the meaning of why we gather each week.

→what happened to the disciples on their way to Emmaus was not what they had hoped for...i.ow. ....they didn't escape as they had planned!

→rather through Word and Meal...they return from where they were running from renewed and invigorated by the encounter with the Lord...

.....*"were not our hearts burning within us as he spoke to us."*

→this is an important point to understand...because all too often we look at Mass or our prayer as a place to *"get away from it all...to have a moment of peace and quiet...to leave everything in our lives behind..."*

→but as we see today....just the opposite is true....

→the Eucharist...our prayer here....**is not a place of escape**, but rather the Eucharist **is the place** where we bring all of life to: triumphs and tragedies, hopes and fears, grace and sin.

→because it is here, hopefully, that our life gains perspective: from the Word we hear, the forgiveness we encounter, the lessons we learn, and the food we share.

PAUSE

→...Emmaus was a place for the disciples to go because their hope had died...their pain was real....and their faith could not imagine a new future.

→but the resurrection is what brings them back to Jerusalem.

→Jesus did not join Cleopas and his friend because of their despair, but rather to rescue them from it.

→[and] in the silent compassion of listening...in the unfolding of the insights from scripture....and finally in the breaking of the bread.....they recognize Jesus!

→[and] having recognized Jessu, these two washed-up disciples find new wind in their sails, new fire in their hearts, and new strength in their souls.

→I imagine the trip **back** seemed much shorter than the long journey **to**?

→**Hope is that way.**

→it puts wings on our feet, smiles in our hearts and sends us back to life...even with all its messiness and uncertainty

→it causes us to believe still in the future that God brings to us.

→for the disciples and for you and me...**to receive the “new blessing” we long for...we have to let go of the “old blessing” of what once was.**

→i.o.w.....if we find ourselves stuck in our own Emmaus...

...we need to simply remember and remind ourselves that

the Risen Lord is always to us closer than we think...