

Happy Easter!

This afternoon's Gospel is one of the most vivid and insightful accounts of our Lord's appearances after His resurrection. It is a story that reveals to us not only something about who we are, but how Jesus opens our eyes to see Him for who He is and about how we can come to know Him.

The journey to Emmaus is both a literal and a spiritual journey. On one hand it recounts the story of two disciples who, after the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord, walk seven miles from Jerusalem to their village of Emmaus. On the other hand, it outlines for us the journey that we all take from not recognizing Jesus, to understanding what the Scripture says about Him, to recognizing Him for who He is, and finally to our giving witness of what we have experienced.

Notice with me a few things about today's Gospel: First, Jesus seeks out His disciples. Second, Jesus opens the eyes of the disciples. Third, Jesus reveals Himself. And, finally, His disciples are moved to share the Resurrection.

Jesus seeks out the disciples. They weren't waiting at the tomb like Mary Magdalene. They didn't run to the tomb like Peter and John.

Although the disciples knew who Jesus was, they did not recognize Him. They knew a lot about Him. They had been witnesses to all those things that had happened in Jerusalem. They had heard, no doubt, on many occasions the things Jesus had testified about Himself. Yet, they were not able to recognize Jesus when they met Him.

There were several reasons they did not recognize Jesus:

First. God did not want them to recognize Him.

The original language conveys the sense that they were kept from recognizing Him because God had a purpose in blinding their eyes from reality. Jesus is not being cruel here. His gradual revelation of Himself allows them to learn certain lessons about trusting God's promises. The disciples had been told about these events many times, but they had not believed.

Second. Events had not happened as expected.

They had a preconceived idea of who Jesus was, what He had come to do, and how He should do it. But when things did not turn out like they thought they should, they dismissed the whole thing as a mere failure, as misplaced hope and trust.

While God always has a plan, we are not always privy to that plan. When things don't turn out like we expect, instead of giving up and admitting defeat, perhaps we would be wise to see things differently, to see if maybe God is up to something we simply do not understand.

Finally. They still had doubts.

They had heard the reports of the women who went to the tomb. Yet, because of his trial and crucifixion, they had never seriously considered who Jesus was and what could happen.

In the same way as these disciples, Jesus seeks us out. And, we need to be careful not to make the same mistake, to discount what God has done simply because we cannot explain it or understand it. While God often uses natural things to accomplish His will, He also does things we can neither explain nor understand. These two disciples knew something had happened, but it was beyond their level of faith to see things as they truly were.

Many people today know who Jesus is. They have heard about Him, study Him, read about Him, use His name, and many even claim to know Him. But, they would not have recognized Him if they saw Him. Their eyes have not been opened. Knowing about Him and knowing Him are two different things.

Then, Jesus opened the eyes of the disciples.

"Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He (Jesus) interpreted to them what referred to Him in all the Scriptures."

And, Jesus has seven miles of walking to do it in. Many of you may walk for fitness. It takes a long time to walk seven miles. Jesus had a long time to open the Scriptures from the Old Testament to them.

While we do not know the specific passages Jesus used, we know that Jesus walked them through the entirety of this revelation to show how it gave witness to who He was, why He had come, and why it was necessary that He suffer.

But, God prevented these two disciples from recognizing Jesus to convey a deep truth: Even if we were to see, we might still not believe.

Let's look at how Jesus reveals Himself.

It is not without significance that it is around the Table that the disciples' eyes and hearts are opened and they see Jesus for who He really is. After the resurrection, many of the appearances of Jesus are associated with breaking bread at Table. Also, in the intimacy of listening to the Word at Mass and receiving the Eucharist, Jesus reveals Himself to us. His working in our lives becomes clearer, and His provision and protection come into focus.

But when they recognized Him He disappears. Our relationship with Jesus does not depend on the ability to see Him, but rather upon taking Jesus at His word.

And notice finally their response. Once they recognized Him, they could not help but share Him.

When your eyes have been opened, you will want others to have their eyes opened too.

Can you imagine the excitement they must have felt? They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" Their encounter with Jesus had been emotional. It had stirred them on the inside. It had moved their hearts and well up inside of them. And once they were moved, they could not help but share.

That very hour, as dark as it was outside, late as it was in the evening, as dangerous as the road might have been, they left at once for Jerusalem. They gave witness that Jesus has been risen, that He had walked with them and talked with them, explained the Scriptures to them, and broke bread at their table.

All who have experienced the risen Savior should be moved with similar emotions. All who have come to know Him should react the same way. We should not be able to contain it.

On this most Holy Day, Easter, know that Jesus wants to walk with you and talk with you. He wants you to have an emotional encounter with Him, an encounter that makes you want to share your faith with others.

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