

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Luke 24: 13-35

Today's Gospel reading is perfect for what we are all going through right now!

Today is the Third Sunday of Easter - exactly two weeks after Easter.

I have read this gospel, or heard it, or proclaimed it throughout my entire life.

In it, I know that Jesus appeared to these two disciples who were leaving Jerusalem after Jesus' death and burial and were walking to Emmaus.

On the way they were talking about what had happened in Jerusalem.

Then a stranger caught up with them.

The stranger was Jesus, but they didn't recognize Him.

Despite my familiarity with this reading, as I prepared this homily over the last several days,

I realized some things I had never noticed before and found out a few new details that were amazing to me.

This Gospel begins with the words, "*That very day,*"

That very day was Easter Sunday.

This single chapter, Chapter 24, of Luke's Gospel, a chapter with only 53 verses or 1060 words, includes Easter morning at Jesus' tomb, followed by this story of the Disciples' encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, that same day, followed by Jesus' first appearance to His Apostles and Disciple in the Upper Room on Easter Sunday evening which includes Jesus' explanation of the Scriptures and the Prophets. This chapter, and St. Luke's Gospel, ends with the Ascension of Jesus into heaven.

Now, back to this gospel, one disciple is named, Cleopas, who along with his companion, were walking away from Jerusalem on **Easter morning**. They were forlorn and debating about the events that had occurred from Good Friday through that Sunday morning. They had either witnessed them or they had heard about them. They felt lost, disappointed, possibly betrayed and very, very confused.

Possibly, we feel now, at this time of contagion and quarantine, like they felt.

As they walked along, Jesus came up behind them, he was not recognizable to them and Jesus asked, "why the long faces?"

They were shocked. How could this stranger, obviously coming from Jerusalem, as well, be oblivious to all the things that had happened?

Jesus asked them, "What sort of things?"

The two companions explained "what sort of things" had happened, but they also admitted to Jesus that **they didn't understand it.**

Which brings up another surprising twist to this story. These men, at least one of them, were not new to the story of Jesus. Perhaps, he **should have** understood it better than he did.

That man is mentioned by name, Cleopas.

Cleopas was not just another disciple.

He was the brother of St. Joseph, the Foster Father of Jesus.

Cleopas was Jesus' uncle.

His wife, Jesus' aunt, was Mary of Clopas, Mary was at the crucifixion with Mary, the Mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalen. Mary of Clopas was also at the tomb of Jesus "that very same morning" and she encountered two angels who asked her and two other women with her, "*Why do you seek the **living one among the dead.** He is not here, **but he has been raised.** Remember what He said to you while in*

Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and be crucified, and rise on the third day.” And the women remembered those words of Jesus.

Then they returned from the tomb and announced all these things to the eleven apostles and to all the others, which may have included her husband, Cleopas.

Also, this Mary of Clopas and her husband, Cleopas, had between them at least six children, if not seven. Their children included Simon, an Apostle, Jude, an Apostle, James the Lesser, an Apostle. Their daughter, Mary Salome, who was married to Zebedee, was the mother of James the Greater, an Apostle and John, an Apostle; that’s five apostles from one family, their family. **AND**, they were relatives of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Cleopas was no stranger to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Surely his companion had connections, too.

Yet, they were both confused and disappointed.

Today, **we** are confused and disappointed, too.

Everything was going “so well” and then all of a sudden, the Church is closed, especially during Mass, and Lent had just started.

No Mass, no Eucharist and No Reconciliation.

No Weddings and no funerals.

No Stations of the Cross, no meetings, gatherings, classes or school.

Holy Week and Easter were only viewed on our Iphones, Ipads and laptops.

Did you, and do you, feel disappointed, confused and abandoned like Cleopas and his companion did?

Yet, ironically, here **they were** walking on the road away from Jerusalem - with Jesus, complaining about the loss of Jesus. They couldn’t see the **obvious!**

Here’s a little quiz:

“Where did Jesus meet Cleopas and his companion?

If you say the road to Emmaus, you get a B+.

If you say on “The Way,” you get an A.

But if you want an A+, you would have to answer, Jesus met them **where they were!**

Jesus came to them and walked with them - where **they were**.

He explained Salvation History to them, so that they would understand what had happened in Jerusalem.

And, they later admitted to themselves, “*Were not our hearts burning within us while He spoke to us on the way and He opened the Scriptures to us?*”

As they neared their destination, Jesus gave them the impression that He was going on farther.

But they urged Him, “*Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.*”

Jesus did stay with them and He ate with them.

We, too, miss Church; we miss Jesus, we, too, miss attending Mass. **but we do not have to be without Jesus - not at all!**

Remember, Jesus is present in His Church in several ways. He is always present in His Word, in this Gospel and in all of Scripture.

Jesus is truly present in the Holy Eucharist, where He is substantially and physically present: Body,

Blood, Soul and Divinity.

Jesus is present in His Church through the Sacraments.

Jesus is present in His priests, without whom, we would have no Sacraments, and

Jesus is physically present in his people.

Jesus said, *“For where two or three are together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* Matthew 18:20

Jesus comes to us - to us, wherever we are!

Jesus is present in us, wherever we are.

At the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the Mass, we come together in communion with one another. We adore, we worship, we praise, we thank Our God. We listen to Him and receive Him in Holy Communion. The Mass is Liturgy, meaning, the Official, Public Worship of His Church.

But, at home, during this period of quarantine, **Jesus is still present with us**. He has never left us (unless we ask Him to leave because of our behavior).

In today’s Gospel, Jesus stayed with Cleopas and his companion. Jesus stayed with them

because they asked Him to come be with them and to join with them for a meal.

Jesus accepted their invitation and went with them, and ate with them.

At this meal, Jesus broke bread with them and these two men suddenly and wonderfully recognized this stranger as Who He was, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Because of their invitation to Jesus, they were privileged to be present at the very first Eucharistic Sacrifice, the very first Mass, in history, after the Last Supper.

Would Jesus have stayed with them if He hadn’t been asked?

St. Cleopas and his companion did ask!

Don’t we thirst for Jesus as He thirsted for us on the cross.

Don’t we hunger for Him.

Don’t we long for Him.

And, **Jesus wants** to be with us more than we could ever understand.

He created us, He loves us, He died for us.

If we ask Him to be with us, nothing in the cosmos could keep Him away.

He will be with us and He will stay with us and never leave.

Have faith,

Have hope and as Jesus said on Easter evening to His Apostles and Disciples,

“Peace be with you.”

And, also remember what Jesus asked His disciples just a short time later,

“Have you anything to eat?”

So, invite Jesus to have supper with you - **every day!**

Amen!