

Third Sunday of Easter – April 23, 2023

We have before us today 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 see Him in others. 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 eleven kilometers 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. 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. I ask myself the question why. Perhaps you have asked yourself this question too.

A. 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.

B. 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.

C. They had little faith: They had heard the reports of the women who went to the tomb. They had seen the empty tomb for themselves and yet they had not believed. The supernatural working of God to raise Jesus from the dead was outside their paradigm. They had never seriously considered who Jesus was.

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.

Just because they knew about Jesus does not mean they knew Him. Just because they could see Him does not mean they could see who He was. Many people today know who Jesus is. They have heard about Him, read about Him, use His name, and many even

claim to know Him. They would not recognize Him if they saw Him. Their eyes have not been opened. Knowing about Him and knowing Him are two different things.

Knowing him leads to seeing Him in others. The Christian Church has a long history of saints who helped the poor, sick, and dying. St. Mother Teresa devoted herself to this vital work. But what sets her apart is the way she not only served people in need, but dignified them. This makes her a model for the first major theme of Catholic social teaching, the life and dignity of the human person.

People often asked Mother Teresa why she loved the poor so much, how she could honour dignity in such difficult situations. In response, she liked to grasp their hand, slowly wiggle one finger at a time, and explain: "You-did-it-to-me." In her mind, you could count the whole Gospel on just five fingers.

Have you had an experience of seeing Jesus in another that profoundly changed your life? I want to share with you these words from Boyd Bailey.

"When I rush through life I tend to see sin in others, not my Savior Jesus. If I first look for someone's imperfections, I jettison the joy of immediately loving them like they were the Lord. Jesus explains in His parable—the counterintuitive claim of feeding, clothing, visiting the sick and those in prison, are all a reflection of caring for Christ, "You did it for me". What a loving lens! Prayerfully, I am able to see others like Jesus—beautiful, precious and worthy of my love.

I find myself from time to time thinking poorly about another, and frankly at times I get downright angry at someone's insensitivity toward me or someone I care about. Only when I pray for them am I prepared to love them like the Lord loves them. I have to ask myself, though I have been hurt by this person, how by the power of the Holy Spirit can I look beyond my hurt to the healing their heart needs. In Jesus' name, I can pray for wholeness of soul for both of us. My posture of prayer prepares me to let go of my hang ups and lift up a needy soul in love. When I pray for people hard to love, it's hard not to love them. Love sees Jesus in others."

All who have experienced the risen Saviour come to know Jesus instead of knowing about him. All who have come to know Him should see Jesus in others. We should not be able to contain this experience. So, at the end of mass, let us hear and take to heart the words: "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord." Amen.