

Third Sunday of Easter A  
Acts 2:14, 22-33; 1 Pt 1:17-21; Lk 24:13-35  
April 23, 2023

Of all the Resurrection appearances of Jesus, we can probably relate to today's Gospel passage most easily because the Emmaus story is really our story.

These two followers of Jesus don't appear anywhere else in the Gospel and we only know the name of one of them. Our lack of knowledge about these two disciples is an important detail, for the scene now shifts from the major figures of Peter, John, Mary Magdalene, and Thomas, to two ordinary people like us, and Jesus comes to them.

I am certain all of us know and have read about religious figures that write books or tell the story of their conversion on television. They are very public, almost professional, Christians. Yet, there are millions of people whose names will never be known to the media, people to whom God is as close and as near as those public Christians.

The Emmaus story shows us that the Risen Jesus is close to each of us, because we are all important to him, as we heard in today's second reading from First Peter: "*we were all ransomed by His very blood.*"

The two disciples to whom Jesus appeared were not in Jerusalem, not in the upper room, not even near the garden tomb. They were on an ordinary road, traveling to Emmaus, a small village a few miles from Jerusalem, a place whose location we are not even certain of today.

We don't have to be in one of the great spiritual centers of the world; Jesus can be with us wherever we are.

The "where" of the Emmaus road is a nameless road, really any road where we are, any point on the road of life as a child, teenager, young adult, parent or senior citizen. The road is anywhere in the world of work, whatever our occupation.

The Emmaus road is anywhere we are personally; in doubt, in grief, in joy, worry, or distress. Jesus is there with us. That is the "where" of the Emmaus road. The road on which those disciples traveled is our road right now and Jesus is with us too.

It seems these two disciples didn't see the empty tomb, and didn't believe the reports they heard. Their way of coming to know Jesus was through the "breaking of the bread", an early term for the Mass. We come to know Jesus through the Scriptures and through the Eucharist. We don't have visions, we don't hear our name called by the audible voice of Jesus, and we don't see the nail prints in his hands and feet. We come to know Jesus through reading and hearing the Scriptures and in the Eucharist, as we gather to do what Jesus told us, "Do this in memory of me."

Whoever we are, wherever we are in our life, the Risen Jesus is near us, and all of us come to recognize his presence in the “breaking of the bread”, in the Mass throughout our life.

We need to stay close to the Mass in difficult times as well as good times. We come to Mass at weddings, at funerals, at Christmas and at Easter. We come to Mass each Sunday, in ordinary times and extraordinary times.

Like those two disciples, we can so focus on our disappointments and our problems; on our preoccupations of how things should be that we can miss the bigger picture.

The disciples thought they had found Jesus the liberator, the one who would free them from Roman oppression, but they found a crucified Redeemer. They thought Jesus would save Israel, but he came to save the Gentiles as well. The disciples could not understand pain, suffering, or misfortune as part of God's plan, yet Jesus showed them that it was.

Like the disciples, we, too, can have our own ideas of Jesus, his message, and his Church. When Jesus broke through these two disciple's blindness with his explanation of the Scriptures and in the “breaking of the bread,” their vision became clearer. The price of recognizing Jesus is always the same: our ideas of him, of the Church, and of the spiritual journey have to be replaced with his truth.

At Mass, through Word, the Scriptures, and through Sacrament, the Eucharist, Jesus teaches us, and opens our eyes to the truth that our lives are part of the bigger picture of God's plan. The Mass is our Emmaus, where our eyes are opened to recognize the truth about Jesus and about ourselves.

In this Easter appearance, in that small town of Emmaus, the Risen Jesus showed those two disciples, and he shows us, where he can always be found, in the breaking of the bread, (the Mass).

- Fr. Stephen Lattner, O.S.B.