

If any good can come of our enduring the Coronavirus, One good thing is that it shakes us from our routines. It makes us take a second look at how we conduct our lives -- Day-in and day-out. We can fall into living on auto-pilot, Unable to recognize what matters most in life.

In today's Gospel, Two disciples are on what they think is an *ordinary* journey. Their lives were clearly shaken by the ignominious death of Christ on the cross. And that *surprised* them. They thought this *Jesus-guy* was the Messiah. *How* could he have died so shamefully!?! These disciples gave up their whole lives to follow Jesus. They *knew* him. They spent all their *time* with him. And he *moved* them -- setting their hearts on *fire* for life's journey to happiness. And yet, once they thought Jesus was gone, they lost *hope* in Him. Even though the women told them of the empty tomb and the angels' announcement of His resurrection from the dead, they didn't *believe*! And *that's* why they failed to recognize the Risen Christ when He came to them on their journey. They thought He was going to be the next King David, Who brings back the golden age of Israel, Defeating the Roman occupation, and restoring the nation to political prosperity. But that was *never* God's plan. He came to free them, not from Rome, but from sin and death. And He did so *through* death itself! And in His resurrection, He *comes* to His dejected friends. He comes to *open* their eyes to His living presence as a stranger, who accompanies them on their journey. He comes to *set* their hearts on fire with His Word in the Scriptures. And He comes to revive their crestfallen spirit in the breaking of the bread.

My friends, two thousand years after the Risen Jesus joined his disciples -- *on* that road to Emmaus -- 2,000 years after He accepted their invitation to *stay* with them -- And 2,000 years after He set them on the right course, back to Jerusalem -- *Even* though He vanished -- He *stayed* with them! And 2,000 years later, in *our* doubts and struggles, in our dejection and disappointments, And in our sense of isolation and fear and wavering hope and faith, Jesus comes to *us*. *We* may be lost in our journeys, Running away and hiding or avoiding what matters most. But Jesus is *never* lost -- Jesus *never* runs away -- *Especially* when we need Him most. All the scriptures today deal with the fact that *each* of us are on a journey. *Life* is a journey. And in that journey, we *sometimes* -- maybe even *oftentimes* -- Think we're alone - that God is not with us. But the whole of Scripture -- *especially* in the light of the Risen Christ -- Scripture is one great testimony to the fact that God *never* abandons us -- Not even when *we* abandon Him!

I'll share again a little of my personal journey to conversion in Christ. As many may know, I was adopted as an infant. I had a wonderful family who made me their own. But even at a formative age as a toddler, I began to let the demon of *lies* creep into my heart. And that lie that I swallowed was that I was *abandoned* -- That I was -- at the *heart* of reality -- *unlovable*. And that I should wall myself in against anyone who dare come close -- Because *they* will only abandon me too.

While I was *irrevocably touched* by Christ on the Cross -- By Christ who gave His *life* and was *raised* again, so we can *trust* that He loves us beyond price and will *never* abandon us -- I started to go down the wrong road in my journey -- To my *own* Emmaus, if you will. My hope was fading, and I even accused God of abandoning me, when in fact, *I* abandoned *Him*!

Yet I could *never shake* Him! He always made His way *back* to me -- To *rescue* me -- *all over again* -- since that wondrous day some 2,000 years ago. The demon of lies was driven out of my heart. The truth of love's triumph, even in the face of death, had taken hold of me. My whole *outlook* changed. As with those two disciples, my eyes were *opened*. I no *longer* imagined God condemned me to a birthmother who threw me away. My eyes were opened to a young

woman who dared to say *yes* to giving birth -- And to *sacrifice* her own motherhood so another could give me a better life. No *longer* did I see God as the distant deadbeat dad of my despondency. My eyes were *opened* to the *God* who *always* loved me! The God who *adopted* me, when He sent His only son as our Passover lamb. The God who *knitted me in my mother's womb*. The God who *gifted* me with an adoptive family I'd call my own, and who planted and nurtured the seeds of faith in me.

My friends, we are *all* on a journey called *life*. And in our struggles and disappointments and sufferings and losses, we may *weaken* in faith, hope, and love. But *know this!* Amen, Amen, I say to you (and to myself): God shall *never* abandon us! Though we at times may abandon Him.

He is *there* in the depths of our darkness, calling us to His light. He is *there* in our frustrations, *reminding* us -- As He reminded those two lost disciples -- That *He* is the way to lasting joy, peace, and gratitude for the gift of life. *He* is the Way to follow after -- As we journey like exiles through the strange land of human frailty and distress.

We are apart right now physically -- socially distant. But with God seeking to *stay with us* awhile -- We are *spiritually united* -- "*alone together,*" as the public service announcement says. So take *advantage* of this time -- A time to *stop* and *see* where Jesus is trying to come into our lives -- And see the road He wants us to travel -- The road of *faith*; The road of *hope*; The road of *love*. Do *not* give into the demon of *lies*.

Let's *open* our eyes to how Jesus comes to us: He comes in the breaking of the bread: the Eucharist we all long for today. He comes in the living Word, that's as true for the disciple 2,000 years ago as it is for us now. And He comes in the *stranger* who *surprises* us -- Who *opens* our eyes to Christ in our suffering, So that He may lift our hearts into the triumph of His resurrection. *Look* at our lives' journeys. *See* where Christ has been with us even in the darkness. Where were *we* for *Him*? Where *are* we for Him? *Pray* that He stay with us awhile -- Especially as night falls.

There's a *beautiful Taize hymn* I beg you to listen to on YouTube. It's called: *Stay with us O Lord Jesus Christ. Stay with US O Lord Jesus Christ, Night will soon fall. Then stay with us O Lord Jesus Christ, Light in our darkness. Play it!* (Ctrl + Click to open link): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ygxWfRC-J8> *Pray it! Live it!* Take *courage*, and *long* for the journey to Jerusalem, The mountaintop we call the Holy *Mass*, *There*, we welcome the *stranger*, *There* our hearts are set *afire* with the *Word* of God, And *there* we are set *free* in the breaking of the bread. Until then, *stay* on the road! And stay with us, O Lord Jesus Christ!