



He took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that, their eyes were opened and they recognized him (Gospel). Rembrandt, Supper at Emmaus (1648).

**3rd Sunday of Easter**  
**May 4<sup>th</sup> 2014**

## 1<sup>st</sup> Reading - Acts 2:14, 22-33

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed: "You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem. Let this be known to you, and listen to my words. You who are Israelites, hear these words. Jesus the Nazarean was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know. This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him. But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it. For David says of him: I saw the Lord ever before me, with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed. Therefore my heart has been glad and my tongue has exulted; my flesh, too, will dwell in hope, because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence."

"My brothers, one can confidently say to you about the patriarch David that he died and was buried, and his tomb is in our midst to this day. But since he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he abandoned to the netherworld nor did his flesh see corruption. God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses. Exalted at the right hand of God, he received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured him forth, as you see and hear."

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading - 1 Peter 1:17-21

Beloved:

If you invoke as Father him who judges impartially according to each one's works, conduct yourselves with reverence during the time of your sojourning, realizing that you were ransomed from your futile conduct, handed on by your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb.

He was known before the foundation of the world but revealed in the final time for you, who through him believe in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

## Gospel - Luke 24:13-35

That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazorean, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave 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." So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

## Homily

Since Pentecost of last year we have been traveling the road with Jesus, watching his mission unfold through the gospels. We note that the first disciples coming to him were seeking to know where his teaching abides. This was the pattern of master to disciple in their culture. And Jesus' answer was always 'Come and see.' The journey has taken us from the Jordan to Galilee, all the way down to Jericho, and finally into Jerusalem where our Lord was put to death. And now Luke's Gospel takes us beyond Jerusalem and the dead Christ, on the road to Emmaus.

Like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the post-modern world seems to be traveling on into history, leaving the events of Jesus' life and death behind as it goes beyond Jerusalem in disappointment and disillusion. Some very modern folks say that it was all quite a story, and do not see its relevance in today's world. We have retained the notion of mentoring in education and business, but it is rare that a mentor is expected or offers what we today would call "life coaching." Often we've carved up various parts of lives into work, home life, recreation, and different people share one component or another. In ancient times, a teacher would address all aspects of life. Life was more holistic in those times, which is something we now have to consciously strive for because it is so easily lost. This is one of the functions of our faith and our faith community: some place where all of ourselves may rest, reside, and try to make sense of our entire lives. There is no other place where such a goal can be sought, even in this modern world.

We see in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, that the prophets called for a complete altering of one's life direction. When Jesus called his disciples, they seemed to leave everything behind in the stories that were preserved. But here and there are inklings that this was not necessarily true. We have the story of Peter's mother in law being healed by Jesus. We certainly have the story at the cross where Jesus asks John to take his mother as Mother, and for Mary to take John as her son. We can see in the early Christian communities that people lived together, sharing their resources and creating a new concept of family. Jesus asked 'Who is my mother, father, brothers and sisters?' It was those who shared a common purpose, the goal of loving one another. It is probable that this principle that transcended the blood and tribal boundaries, bringing people together from disparate backgrounds, was what led to the growth of Christianity like wildfire in the beginning.

But the message of Love has clearly taken a back seat to the organizational structures that have replaced family units and the early Christian community units. It is inevitable that as structure is imposed, our lives are divided up into various segments and it is difficult for us to put them together again or to experience ourselves and one another as whole people. This is what the church still tries to do. We have various humanitarian or community structures that try to create a facsimile of this lost relationship between people. Some succeed to a certain extent. It is interesting that even today, where the early church's principles are modeled, there is some success. Perhaps these are systemic principles laid down in the nature of our world and developing through religion from earliest humanity actually work. So what can we learn from these early stories out of Christianity?

In today's gospel, Luke reports that the disciples looked downcast when Jesus drew near and he asked what they were discussing as they walked along. They, like much of the world today, were experiencing a loss of hope, are wondering how to carry on as they mourn Jesus' death, not yet having discovered for themselves that He is still with them.

The two disciples traveled along the road for a while with Jesus without recognizing him. They recounted to him that some women had found the tomb empty and had reported having had a vision of angels who announced that Jesus was alive. Jesus chides them, calling them foolish and slow of heart as he points out that they should recognize that they have witnessed all of the prophecies fulfilled.

The disciples traveled on with Jesus until it was nearly evening, not yet realizing that they were in his presence. This particular detail strikes me as reflecting how caught up we are in our daily reality, that we miss a deeper level of awareness. Paul says in 1 Corinthians as he ends his famous chapter 13 on love, that now we see darkly, as in a mirror ...but then face to face. Yes, it is a mystery, to come into that deeper awareness, and the disciples along the Emmaus Road were second or third tier disciples removed from the intimate inner circle, but they were deeply affected by Jesus' death. So Jesus stays with them, teaches them, brings them into a deeper understanding of who he was. He didn't reserve himself just for the special ones: these two travelers met him in person, just as we can meet him in person.

We too can often feel that the world is traveling on sorrowfully toward evening as the light of faith seems at times to be dimming.

Jesus revealed himself to the disciples in the breaking of the bread and their eyes were opened. This is the simple truth that he instituted at the Last Supper which is the foundation of our Eucharist. He has promised that wherever two or three are gathered in his name he would be among them (Matthew 18:20). Here, for the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, he is fully present in the blessing and the breaking of the bread. Then Jesus vanished from their sight.

We need no other scriptural proofs that the Christ, "The Word", is revealed in the breaking of the bread. And that is why the Eucharist is the very heart of Christian worship. We need not become scholars to understand this, nor should we attempt to find Christ elsewhere. He is manifest and among us in the shared meal in his name. He is truly present. Different denominations argue about how he is present, or whether the Supper was intended just to be a memorial to him. In my view, they do not understand that memory and recollection includes the past, present, and future. He is truly here. And through the Eucharist Christ is revealed in those who receive his essence and who go out to serve others.

This idea of Jesus as the Eucharistic presence in table fellowship began with Jesus dining with sinners of every sort. In those early days of his mission it was not yet understood that, in dining with him, one gradually takes on something of his nature. It was not only his words or his hospitality that created the changes within those who came to the table, but something essential in his very presence and the blessing of the food. Of course Jesus could have chosen any means, but instead of a hand shake or a phrase or a dance he chose to dine in wotj table fellowship with common nobodies, outcasts, Pharisees, tax collectors and riffraff of every sort. He was entirely indiscriminate in regard to those with whom he dined.

He offered the loaves and fishes in the feeding of the 5,000 that were normally reserved for the ordinands of the Temple priesthood to Samaritans and all manner of others who had been marginalized from the Temple system. After feeding five thousand there was a surplus. This is in direct contrast to the story in Exodus concerning the manna in the desert that was only available in enough supply for a single day with nothing left in reserve.

While the custom of the ancient world was for the rich to dine at separate tables from the poor, Jesus gathered friends and strangers, those of faith and those who'd lost faith, Greek and Jew, slave and free, male and female, rich and poor. He asked for no credentials. He made no demands, but instead offered to fill them all. By this magnanimous example we will recognize the true church. He provides the substance of his essence so that we might share in eternal life.

Christ calls to us to return to the place of hope and joy saying, 'Come to the feast!' Let us give thanks and be mindful that we take the spirit of his feast with us as we go out into the world today as emissaries of the Light of the Christ to restore hope to those we meet.

***Peter bravely proclaimed it  
Through the Spirit,  
To the city:***

***Death could not  
Hold Christ.***

***We too pray to hear and feel  
Your Spirit, O Jesu,  
In our neighbors,  
In ourselves.  
Let our lives  
Boldly proclaim it:  
Your life, death and your resurrection***

***From the start of the world  
God loved us  
Ransomed and transformed us  
And all creation.***

***Within this very truth  
We find our meaning.***

***In this very love, we find our hope.***

***A nameless stranger spoke,  
And their hearts  
Burned.***

***Walk with us too!  
Let our hearts burn within us!***

***Their eyes were opened  
When he blessed and broke  
Bread.***

***Let us know  
You in the breaking  
Of the bread  
And in every person we meet.***

***They begged him to stay with them  
In the village they called home.***

***Please stay with us.  
Do not leave us at the end of this day,  
Or at the end of all our days.***

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