

## **HOMILY for 3<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY of EASTER – Year A**

This Sunday's Gospel shares with us another encounter between the risen Christ & two of His disciples. Reflecting on that story, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A Sunday school teacher challenged her children to take some time on Sunday afternoon to write a letter to Jesus. They were to bring their letters back the following Sunday. One little boy, Benny, wrote, "Dear Jesus, we had a good time at church today. Wish you could have been there!"

Anyway, today's Gospel tells us how the disciples felt after the crucifixion & burial of their master. They were sad & lost. They did not know if they would have ever seen Him again, or how their lives would turn out to be. They heard some of their friends had met the risen Christ, including doubting Thomas. But, they had not seen the risen Christ themselves. They did not know how their future would be like with their master being gone from their lives for good. They no longer could follow Jesus & help Him reach out to the hungry & the suffering. Jesus used to give their lives purpose & bring hope to their future. Now, they would have to figure out how to pick up their broken hearts & move on with their uncertain future. They tried to make sense out of what just happened to their master. Today's Gospel shares with us that they were discussing with one another about their dream journey with Jesus being cut short.

I don't know if you have ever lost a family member or friend suddenly before or not. One moment that person was in your life; the next moment he/she disappears from you for good. You wonder what was going on & try to make sense out of that bewildering situation. You feel sad about the loss of that relationship & the memory that you shared with the person. You cherish that relationship & try to understand why God called him/her home. You muster up all the strength & courage to continue your life journey & try to see what you need to do next. During that time of loss & confusion, you rely on friendships & family relationships to help you carry on with your life. Those friends & family members give you strength & courage to keep on with your life mission that God still calls you to do. That seems to be the case with the two disciples in today's Gospel. They had to rely on their friendship to figure out what happened to their master & the mission that they were called to do as they debated with each other about the death of Jesus.

But, these two disciples did not realize that they would have another person to lean on in their challenging time besides their friendship & other close relationships. This is how today's Gospel describes their encounter with Jesus, "...Two disciples of Jesus that same day [the first day of the Sabbath] were making their way to a village named Emmaus seven miles distant from Jerusalem, discussing as they went all that had happened. In the course of their lively exchange, Jesus approached & began to walk along with them. However, they were restrained from recognizing Him." As you can see, Jesus was with the two disciples during their bewildering & challenging time. Unfortunately, they could not recognize Him. They thought that they had to deal with their daily challenges & walk the journey of the cross all by themselves. They assumed that the crucifixion & burial of Jesus was the end of their master despite some sightings of His resurrection. They felt lost & hopeless without the presence of their master. Thankfully, Jesus revealed Himself & showed them the way to move forward.

Once again, today's Gospel tells us how Jesus did that as following, "...Then He said to them, 'What little sense you have! How slow you are to believe all that the prophets have announced! Did not the Messiah have to undergo all this so as to enter into His glory?' Beginning then with Moses & all the prophets, He interpreted for them every passage of Scripture which referred to Him. By now, they were near the village to which they were going, & He acted as if He were going farther. But, they pressed Him: 'Stay with us. It is early evening – the day is practically over.' So, He went in to stay with them." It continues, "When He had seated with them to eat, He took bread, pronounced the blessing, then broke the bread & began to distribute it to them. With that, their eyes were opened & they recognized Him." So, the first way that Jesus gave the two bewildering disciples insights & encouragement was through the Bible. He opened their mind to understand all the ancient prophecies about the Messiah. The second way that Jesus gave them courage & guidance was through the Eucharist. He broke bread & helped them recognize His presence in their midst.

Similarly, besides the support of our families & friends, Jesus wants us to come to the Bible & the Eucharist in challenging time so that He can lift us up & give us the right guidance. When we pray the Bible, Jesus would be able to bring us comfort & wise counsels. He would help us make sense out of the challenges of our daily life. He would teach us how to reconcile & forgive one another. He would show us right from wrong & how to defeat evil & darkness. Most importantly, He would bring us hope & encouragement when we feel lost & bewildered in this world. Meanwhile, when we come around that Altar for the Eucharist, Jesus would be able to strengthen & nourish us. If we go for a few days without eating & drinking, our body would lack nourishment & die. So, our soul or spirit would need similar nourishment if we want it to be strong & healthy. Moreover, in the Eucharist, we can see how much Jesus loves us & wishes us to remain in His love. That is how Jesus could support us in tough time.

My dear brothers & sisters, we all have moments of feeling lost & discouraged like the two disciples in today's Gospel. We can count on our families & friends to give us help & support. But, the risen Christ lets us know today that we can also rely on the Bible & the Eucharist to give us hope & encouragement when we go through those moments. So, let us keep that in mind as we continue our life journey with Jesus as Christians.