



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend's Gospel is about the journey to Emmaus. On Easter Sunday afternoon, two disciples (one names Cleophas) are walking the seven mile journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They are discussing what has happened with Jesus' death. Jesus appears to them, though they do not recognize him, and asks them about their discussion. In this story, Jesus celebrates Mass for them – beginning with the Liturgy of the Word (showing how Moses and the Prophets refer to Him and His death and resurrection), and then the Liturgy of the Eucharist (as He breaks the bread for them, and then disappears from their sight... because He is now present in the Eucharist).

This great passage shows Jesus' continuing presence with His people, even in the midst of struggles, questions, discouragement, and even despair. They know that dead is dead (probably better than we do ... after all, all our superheroes keep coming back to life). All of their hope lay in Jesus, the One who would redeem Israel, yet He was killed. What could happen now? How could they go on?

With all of this loss of hope, these disciples are heading in the wrong direction. They should be heading to Jerusalem instead of away from it.

I love how gentle Jesus is at bringing us back to Him. First, He appears in a non-threatening way. He asks them questions. He wants to know the pain and suffering that is on their hearts. He wants them to know that He cares enough to ask. Just as He cares about our struggles, troubles, worries and fears.

Then He points out to them how God was really working through all of it! God had not abandoned them, nor would He. He goes through the Scriptures to point out how this was all part of God's plan, even if they could not see His finger of love moving in their lives. And how often are we blind to God's action and movement in our lives. Too often it is only well after the fact that we look back and see, "Oh yeah, God didn't abandon me. If that hadn't happened, I would never have been able to do ..."

Jesus never forces Himself on us, though. As they reach Emmaus, Jesus acts as if He will be continuing on, and so the disciples press Him to stay with them. He will be present to us. He will try to show us His hand of love, but He will wait for an invitation. If we tell Him to "take a hike," He will never force Himself on us. He wants us to want Him.

In the end, He reveals Himself to the disciples through the Eucharist, and without ever once telling them that they are going the wrong way, the encounter with Him makes them realize it, and they immediately head out and rush back to Jerusalem. And so with us, when we spend time with the Eucharist (remember that we have Adoration times during the times when Masses were scheduled and on Wednesdays 8:30-8:30am, and 2-8pm, and the Eucharistic Chapel is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week), we come to recognize Jesus, how He is present to us in our lives. It's an amazing thing that as we train our eyes to pierce the appearance of bread and see Jesus, our eyes will soon pierce the people and circumstances around us and see Jesus present there.

In the end, time with Jesus (in sacrament – virtually or in person – and in prayer) leads us to realize when we need to turn around. Our hearts will be set on fire, and we will go seeking Him and His enduring love.

May this Easter Season continue to lead you daily to seek the Risen Christ.