

3 Easter B 2021 SML LK 24:35-48

This morning's gospel begins with the verse:

The two disciples recounted what had taken place on the way, and how Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. LK 24:35

Luke the Evangelist was referring to the two disciples who had walked the Road to Emmaus. These two disciples were:

- ✓ so absorbed in their own woes,
- ✓ so forlorn in their mistaken conclusion that the One in Whom they had placed all their trust was dead,
- ✓ so shocked by the shame,
- ✓ the scandal,
- ✓ and the scorn of that last Friday called Good;

not to mention that it was not at all popular to believe in Our Blessed Lord. So they walked:

- ✓ the wrong way,
- ✓ away from Jerusalem,
- ✓ away from Our Lord,
- ✓ and they failed to recognize Him even as He walked right alongside them!

They had turned inward to themselves, their worries, their burdens, their fears; rather than turn to Him:

- ✓ the Way, the Truth, and the Life,
- ✓ the One Who told them over and over again, "Be not afraid!",
- ✓ Who would assure them that He "would be with them always, even to the end of the world,"
- ✓ Who promised them that "not even the gates of hell would prevail,"
- ✓ the One who billions of Catholics would recognize, time and again in the "breaking of the bread" of the Holy Eucharist;

Yet, these two disciples, who walked miles with Our Blessed Lord, and who eventually came to recognize Him in the "breaking of the bread:"

- ✓ turned around,
- ✓ made a complete 180,
- ✓ returned to Jerusalem,
- ✓ to Our Blessed Lord,

and found the Apostles in varying degrees of disbelief.

The Apostles believed at first they had seen a ghost, despite:

- ✓ the words of the women;
- ✓ the testimony of the disciples of Emmaus;
- ✓ the empty tomb;
- ✓ the angelic vision;
- ✓ Peter and John's account of all they saw;

✓ and the Risen Lord's appearance in a room locked and bolted.

Reproving them for their unbelief, just as He did the disciples of Emmaus, Our Blessed Lord said to them, "Why are you so troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet. Touch me and see; no ghost has flesh and bones as you can see that I have." (24:38-39)

Peter, James and John had the privilege of seeing Him transfigured when His garments were whiter than snow and His Face shown like the sun, but the rest of the disciples had only seen Him as a Man of Sorrow. So He showed them His battle scars. As many a soldier look upon the wounds received in battle not as a disfigurement, but as a trophy of honor, so Our Blessed Lord wore His wounds to prove that Love was stronger than death.

But the Apostles still were not convinced.

They were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, and so He asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" So they gave him a piece of baked fish and he ate it in front of them. 24:41-42

To some extent, they believed He rose from the dead, and that belief gave them great joy, but the joy was so great, they could hardly believe it. At first they were too frightened to believe.

Now they were too joyful to believe. So the strongest proof He could give of His resurrection was to eat with them.

At the raising of the daughter of Jairus, Our Blessed Lord ordered that food should be given to her:

Taking her by the hand, Jesus said to her, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." Immediately the girl got up and walked, and they were immediately overcome with amazement. And He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat. (MK 5:41-43)

Thus Our Blessed Lord proved to His Apostles that He had risen by showing them His hands, feet and side, and by eating with them. And once the Apostles understood that Our Blessed Lord is Our Risen Lord, whether or not believing in Him was popular no longer mattered. They went out and conquered the world.

Wokeness is front and center in our society today, and in and of itself, wokeness, or awareness of issues that concern social justice and racial justice, is a good thing. However, when wokeness is expanded to a label for vigilance and activism that is often violent or uncooperative with the law, and any pushback to the values and beliefs of special interest groups is considered racist or sexist or any other form of bigotry, then the expanded understanding wokeness is a bad thing.

During his pilgrimage to the United States, Our Holy Father Benedict found it necessary to address Catholic educators, specifically the leadership of “Catholic” colleges and universities, and shared with them some thoughts regarding the nature and identity of Catholic education today.

I would like to quote the Holy Father’s address as his writings are timeless, and one would have thought he gave this address last week, with the expanse of wokeness that is so very prevalent today:

When nothing beyond the individual is recognized as definitive, the ultimate criterion of judgment becomes the self and the satisfaction of the individual's immediate wishes.

We observe today a timidity in the face of the category of the good and an aimless pursuit of novelty parading as the realization of freedom. We witness an assumption that every experience is of equal worth and a reluctance to admit imperfection and mistakes.

Yet it is also the case that any appeal to the principle of academic freedom in order to justify positions that contradict the faith and the teaching of the Church would obstruct or even betray the university's identity and mission; a mission at the heart of the Church’s mission to teach and not somehow be autonomous or independent of it.

While these remarks could have been made last week, Our Holy Father's remarks were given in the shadows of two decisions that same year on the part of "Catholic" universities, to admit an historic government figure, which is certainly a novelty, but whose enthusiastic pro-death platform is in clear contradiction to the Church's teaching on the sanctity of human life. Such are the decisions that walk the wrong way, that walk the Road to Emmaus, that walk away from Our Blessed Lord.

To invite a pro-death government leader to speak at a Catholic University, and then for that Catholic University to heed his request to cover the crucifix and the Holy Name of Jesus - to quote the Holy Father, "obstructs and betrays the university's identity and mission." What's more important, honoring a pro death president or not denying Jesus Christ? The very words of Our Blessed Lord answers the question. "Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father." (MT 10:32-33) What these Catholic universities should do is say they "identify" as a Catholic university, and then we could all respond with an understanding nod.

We are at similar crossroads today, with government leaders, two of the most powerful, who claim they are devout Catholics, but they are not. They might be “Catholic,” but they are not devout. What they should say is they “identify” as a devout Catholic, and then we could all respond with an understanding nod.

Jesus’ words from the Cross, “Father, forgive them for they know NOT what they do,” do not apply here, as they are not ignorant like Jesus’ executioners were. They know. They know. As Fulton Sheen has said, “A lie is still a lie even if everybody is telling it just like the truth is still the truth, even if no one believes it.”

So what is our recourse? There is always the temptation to write a letter to the Catholic in name only using Emmaus as their address, containing our righteous wrath, but such an attitude makes us like the Pharisees who felt justified in throwing stones because we have caught the adulterous woman.

That would be wrong. That would be wrong because like Jesus, we have not been sent into the world:

- ✓ to condemn the wrong but to make the wrong right;
- ✓ not cry “unclean” but to wash clean;

✓ not to damn but to save.

He that came not to call the just but sinners. Therefore, it is not our business to prove they are wrong, however satisfying that may be. It's not even our business to prove we are right, as if the truth came from us and not from God. It is our business to preach Christ and Him Crucified and let that Truth conquer by its own right.

Our Blessed Lord was born into similar political, financial and social circumstances as today. And the question was asked Him, "Is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar?"

And how did Our Lord answer? "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." In other words, the important problem is:

- ✓ not the Roman problem
- ✓ or United States problem,
- ✓ but the spiritual problem.

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things will be added unto you." And that's why Jesus left:

- ✓ Caesar on his throne,
- ✓ Pilate on his judgement seat,
- ✓ and Herod in his court,

and He sent out His Apostles full of the spirit of God and, without compromising with the cross, they conquered the world.