



YEAR A – APRIL 26, 2020

Father Mark Link tells a story about a lady named Regina Riley. Her story is one to which many parents can relate. For years she prayed that her two sons would return to the faith. Then one Sunday morning in church she could not believe her eyes. Her two sons came in and sat across the aisle from her. Her joy and gratitude overflowed. Afterward she asked her sons what prompted their return to the faith. The younger son told their story.

One Sunday morning while vacationing in Colorado, they were driving down a mountain road. It was raining cats and dogs. Suddenly, they came upon an old man without an umbrella. He was soaked through and through and walked with a noticeable limp. Yet he kept drudging doggedly along the road. The brothers stopped and picked him up. It turned out that the stranger was on his way to Mass at a church three miles down the road. The brothers took him there.

Since the rain was coming down so hard, and since they had nothing better to do, they decided to wait for the stranger to take him home after Mass. It wasn't long before the two boys figured they might as well go inside, rather than wait out in the car. As the two brothers listened to the reading of the scriptures and sat through the breaking of the bread, something moved them deeply. The only way they could later explain it was: "You know, Mom, it just felt right. Like getting home after a long, tiring journey."

The story of the two brothers, and their encounter with the stranger on the Colorado road, bears a striking resemblance to today's Gospel (Luke 24:13-35). The two disciples traveling along the Emmaus road had once followed Jesus with hope and joy. They truly believed he was sent by God to establish God's kingdom. Then came the stormy hours of Good Friday. All their hopes and dreams were smashed into a thousand pieces. Totally disillusioned, they left Jesus in an unmarked tomb and returned to their form ways. It was against this background that they met the stranger on the road to Emmaus on Easter Sunday morning and the rest is history.

The story of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus and the story of the two brothers on the Colorado road are not unlike our own story at times. We too have stormy periods in our lives when our faith gets smashed into a thousand pieces. Even Mother Teresa wondered, as she walked the streets of Calcutta, if God cares or does he even exist?

Perhaps for us, it was the death of a loved one, when our prayers were not answered by God. But the neighbor's prayers were answered, and their father lived. Or perhaps it is the present scandals at all levels in the church institution, with all its man-made rules and regulations. Or is it the virus that has shut down the whole world including all our churches where we can no longer break bread with each other and with our Lord? Do you miss the Eucharist?

So, where is Jesus in all of this? He is close at hand. Look for him with the eyes of faith and you will find him. He is in every man, every woman and every child who helps to alleviate the pain and suffering of people during this time of testing. Like that encounter on the road to Emmaus, some folks do not recognize him when they are in his presence. But visionaries and mystics can see our Lord and the "Cosmic Christ" everywhere, not only in the "the breaking of the bread".