

3rd Sunday of Easter 2020
Homily/Reflection
Fr. Ed

If I could summarize my thoughts this week it would boil down to one word: Church. The Gospel passage we hear from the Gospel of Luke called, The Road to Emmaus is my absolute favorite passage is Sacred Scripture because in so many ways, it expresses who we are as a people of faith and what it means to be Church.

As we recall, the Second Vatican Council underscored the truth that the people are the Church. Are churches, church buildings, lead us to encounter God? Yes! Absolutely, the concrete mortar that gives rise to a house of worship helps us to encounter God. At the end of the day though, the Church is the people and it is living and breathing. Given this, there are a couple ways of being the living breathing Church I'd like to touch on this week. The first is a matter of prayer and the second is a matter of encounter or experience.

In these times during the coronavirus epidemic we miss a lot of things we are accustomed to doing. One of these things is going to Mass. We come to Church many different times for many different prayer experiences but the most primary for most people is the Mass. What we see in the Road to Emmaus is a summary of how we most commonly pray when we come to Church. When I teach RCIA (Rite of Christians Initiation for Adults) I also use this passage. What we see is Jesus meeting these two disciples on the road, checking in with them, breaking open scripture, then the disciples invite Jesus in, they offer to Jesus what they have and then the Lord reveals Himself to them in the Breaking of the Bread, and finally they go out to share their experience. In this summary of the Road to Emmaus we see exactly what we do every time we come to Mass. When we come to Mass Jesus meets us on our way, where we are in our individual journeys and there, He checks in with us, in the Penitential Rite (or Sprinkling Rite) we are reminded of God's mercy. Then in The Readings, the Scriptures are proclaimed and broken open, pointing us to Christ, pointing us to Salvation. Then, we have the offertory, we give to God our gifts of bread, wine, stewardship, and whole of who we are just as these disciples invited Jesus in. Then, the most obvious connection, there's the Liturgy of the Eucharist i.e. the Breaking of the Bread and then finally, the dismissal we are sent out to share our encounter like the disciples did that day. So, in the Road to Emmaus we see our central way of praying publicly as a Church, communicated to us in story form.

Now to the encounter or experience part of these thoughts. So, if you're like me, what gives you hope in this story is that we know the ending. Despite being sad or despairing at the beginning, we know these disciples are going to come to a point where they're on fire and full of joy. Sometimes it is easy to overlook or skip through the beginning part where Jesus is walking with the disciples in their disappointment. At the same time, we need to trust the process and appreciate the entire story. As Church, we are called to walk with each other and to trust that Jesus is walking with us, in good times and in bad. We are called to trust that if we allow the Lord to walk with us in challenging times then he'll lead us to moments of fire and joy. Part of the process is trusting and walking with each other in these hard times.

When times are tough, like the Lord who pointed to what referred to Him in all of Scripture beginning with Moses and the prophets, look to the signs that point to God. For example, there was a time I can recall where I was struggling a bit. It was in the midst of this struggle that I received random texts of support from people and a random but much needed encounter with a brother priest. These encounters were not of my doing but yet signs that the Lord is walking with me and helping me along the way but sending others to walk with me. So, the advice here is to look for the signs of how God is walking with you, be open to reflecting and listening. In doing so, we can see how we are being Church for one another and how God is walking with us.

The Road to Emmaus evokes so much within us and for many like me, it is a favorite passage. May we allow this passage to also help us to know how we're called to be Church for one another by the way in which we pray and by the way in which we encounter our faith together with Christ.