

April 26, 2020 Surprise, Surprise Homily: One of the most celebrated storytellers of the last century was a Polish born American Jew, Isaac Bashevis Singer, who, for many years, lived in New York City. Gifted with a keen intelligence and an extraordinary imagination, Singer's readership continues to be most impressive years after his death. He was once asked, "What is the key to a good story?" He replied, "A story to me means a plot where there is some surprise. Because this is how life is - full of surprises."

Life indeed is full of surprises. It is worthy of note that in all the accounts of Our Lord's Resurrection, there is surprise. St. Luke the Evangelist was a master storyteller. Of all his stories, today's gospel reading of Christ encountering the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is perhaps the most memorable of all. It is memorable if only because of the element of surprise that disrupts the lives of the followers of Jesus.

The most stunning surprise in history... literally earth shaking... was the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. No one expected it. Certainly, the disciples on the way home to Emmaus were not prepared for the surprise. Luke tells us they were "downcast". (Lk. 24:17) Their hope had been shattered by the death of Jesus. Nor had Mary Magdalene, who was steadfast in her devotion by standing near the cross of Jesus on that unforgettable Friday afternoon. Having given no thought whatsoever to His promise of resurrection; she brought spices to His tomb early Sunday morning. Even those closest to Jesus, the Apostles, were lacking in faith. They were behind locked doors on the evening of the first day of the week.

Easter Sunday changed everything. The eyes of the disciples were, at last, opened. What surprised the disciples of Emmaus?

First, a group of women close to Jesus; "Some women from our group have astounded us, they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body. They came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that He was alive." (Lk. 24:23)

Second, Jesus broke open the scriptures for them. "Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures." (Lk. 24:27) The disciples were stunned. "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Lk.24:32); and

Third, they did not recognize Jesus until the breaking of the bread, (Lk. 24:31) a clear reference to the mystery of the Eucharist, which, at the time of the writing of the gospel, was being celebrated on the first day of the week, Sunday.

The Good News of Christ's resurrection and his appearances to his disciples afterwards almost seem too good to be true. But keep in mind that our own first surprise may be a distant memory today; It happened when we were born and realized there was another world outside our mother's womb!

If we have not lost our sense of wonder, we can still be surprised by joy. And it is indisputable that the author of the Third Gospel, Luke, was one of many who were "blown away" by the greatest story ever told. It is not a work of fiction. It is history's most astonishing drama, and its most remarkable story.

Amen!