Fr. Curtis Miller   April 26, 2020   Homily for the 3rd Sunday of Easter

Jesus appeared after His resurrection to two of His disciples walking on the road to a town called Emmaus, but they do not recognize Him at first. They are troubled and deeply saddened by the tragic events of the previous few days. They had hoped that Jesus was their long-awaited Messiah, but He was put to death and so it seemed that their hopes were again disappointed. Then Jesus began to speak to them, and something starts to change in their hearts.

This mysterious encounter of the disciples on the road to Emmaus with the Risen Christ is a lot like what we experience at every Mass.

On the road, Jesus begins with a review of the Scriptures, pointing out all the prophecies which foretold that the Messiah was to suffer and die, yet rise again. We begin Mass, also, with readings from the Scriptures. As we listen to these readings, and in the homily, we should make these connections, too, seeing how God already was revealing His plan for salvation in the centuries before Jesus came.

When we see the beauty and order of God's plan, rising up out of what must have felt like chaos to the Israelites who lived through those troubled centuries of enslavement, wandering, conflict, and exile, our hearts should burn, too. As we look at the chaos in our own lives and in the world around us, we are inspired to trust that God has a plan for us in this time, too. God is all powerful and all loving. He will guide us through these trying times and bring about good through them.

When they reached their destination in Emmaus, they asked Jesus to stay with them, and He did. At Mass, we also offer make requests to God in the intercessions, and we believe that God answers those prayers. Perhaps the best prayer we can offer is the prayer of these disciples at Emmaus, "Jesus, stay with us, remain with us."

The next moment is central: the breaking of the bread, the Eucharist. It was at this moment that the two disciples finally recognized Jesus, and at that same moment, He disappeared from their sight. Yet the bread that Jesus has broken and blessed, we believe, had become His Body. Though they cannot see Him, Jesus is still with these disciples. And, likewise, Jesus comes to us in the bread and wine that are blessed here at Mass to be really transformed into His Body and Blood. Jesus is here with us. Though we cannot gather together for Mass at this time to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us look forward with expectant hope and joy to the day when we finally will be able to receive that great gift of Jesus Himself in the Eucharist again.

The two disciples had been walking away from Jerusalem, almost as if they were walking away from their hope in Jesus. Sadly, we all know many people who have lost faith, who have turned their backs on God or the Church, and walked away. At the end

of this story of Emmaus, however, we see the two disciples turned around and ran back to Jerusalem to tell everyone else the Good News that Jesus had risen from the dead.

At the end of Mass, we are also sent forth and we should go running, not because we're in a hurry to get out of Church, but because we are excited to share the same Good News of Jesus' resurrection with everyone. We should chase down those people who are sadly wandering away, and invite them back to faith in Jesus.

But if our sharing of the Gospel is to be effective, we first need to have had that personal encounter with the Risen Christ ourselves, to have spent time with Him and experienced the grace of His resurrection, or else our witness won't be credible. We must first believe in Jesus' resurrection ourselves; only then can we proclaim it to others.

The road that we walk through life is often hard and sad, full of many disappointments, just like that road to Emmaus. We can feel alone, but the truth is that Jesus is always walking alongside us. Let us pray that Jesus will set our hearts aflame, help us look up and open our eyes to see that He is with us, that He has always been with us, and He will be with us forever.