

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20). Jesus was encouraging his disciples to pray when he spoke these words. In light of his death, we see Jesus going out of his way to help his disciples understand the resurrection in fulfillment of the scriptures.

- At dawn when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb they were surprised and shaken to the core. Then, they were overjoyed to encounter Jesus as they left the tomb. “Jesus met them on their way and greeted them. They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me” (Mt 28:9-10).
- On the Road to Emmaus, Jesus encountered Cleopas and a second disciple. Neither recognized Jesus. “Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures” (Lk 24:27). Although they could not put their finger on it, their hearts recognized Jesus while he spoke. Finally, their minds caught up as they recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread.
- Cleopas and the other disciple share the good news with the 11 Apostles in Jerusalem. As they explained their encounter with the risen Christ, he appears to them and breaks open the scriptures for the larger group. Jesus wants them to understand about his redemptive suffering and their role in proclaiming the Good News.

As we continue throughout the Octave of Easter, the eight days between Easter Sunday and Divine Mercy Sunday, there will be additional encounters with the risen Christ.

For now, let us draw some meaning from these three encounters. Like Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, death often causes us to be shaken to the core. Jesus is never far from us when we gather for a funeral. People often want a celebration of life. They want to hold on to memories and remember only the good. As we gather for a funeral, we are filled with hope because Jesus is the first born of the dead. His resurrection makes it possible for our sins to be forgiven and for the doors to heaven to be open. The true celebration of life is not what a person may have accomplished during their time on earth. No, the true celebration is gathering in the presence of Jesus at the eternal banquet in heaven.

The story of the disciples encountering Jesus on the road to Emmaus is a capsule summary of the Mass. In our journey of faith, we gather to hear the words of scripture proclaimed. We gather on the Lord’s Day, the day of resurrection and celebrate the Paschal Mystery at each and every Mass. Christ is present as his words are proclaimed. Christ is present in the breaking of the bread. Instead of Jesus breaking open the scriptures for us, a priest or deacon has the sacred duty of trying to relate scripture to our daily lives. At the conclusion of Mass, we are dismissed to bring the good news to others. “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.”

In the appearance to the disciples in Jerusalem, Jesus stresses the suffering Messiah. “It is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Lk 24:46-47).

There is suffering in every life. When we unite our own suffering to the suffering of Christ, we become partners with Jesus in his Paschal Mystery. Christ’s redemptive suffering has value for all of humanity. We can participate in that saving mission as we pick up our own cross and follow Jesus through death to resurrection (CCC 618).

All three passages we have looked at call for the disciples to share the Good News with others. Jesus is present when we gather in his name and like the first disciples, he wants us to carry that Good News to others. “Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me” (Mt 28:9-10).