

Today on the third Sunday of Easter, we continue to hear Gospel accounts of Jesus' appearances to his disciples following his Resurrection. The Gospel of St. Luke tells us a beautiful story about two disciples walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. St. Luke first gives us a picture of their hopelessness. They were walking away from Jerusalem. They were walking into a sunset. "Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him." They stopped in despair and said: "We were hoping that he was the one who would set Israel free."

The two disciples were walking and talking with Jesus and they didn't even know it because their hope had gone, their dream had died. They had been following Jesus, but now he was dead. Their dream of a new world was over. Everything was finished. They thought that Jesus had totally failed. And the failure of Jesus was also their own failure. So, with a mental state like that, they walked with heavy footsteps and down-cast faces.

The story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is also our story. We have walked the road to Emmaus, if not once, then many times. It is the path of fallen expectations, broken dreams, and lost hopes: Maybe it is a marriage that didn't last, a child who went bad, an unexpected illness, a coronavirus pandemic, or a sudden death. One day we find ourselves walking with the same heavy footsteps that these two disciples experienced. Our faces are downcast like theirs. And then, we don't dare believe that the **Risen Lord** is walking with us. We don't dare believe that Jesus still lives in this world today. We don't dare believe that the values of the teaching of Jesus are not dead, but still exist. So, as Christians how do you find joy and hope again?

The Emmaus story mentions three milestones that the two disciples experience on the journey to find joy and hope again.

The first milestone is the Scriptures. The light of the Scriptures changed them. Here, the fact that Jesus was sentenced to death and was crucified is never changed. It's the same. However, when Jesus explains to them the incident based on the Scriptures, they rediscover the meaning of this incident. "Their hearts are burning." And instead of sadness, joy is rekindled.

And the second milestone is when the two disciples invite Jesus to stay with them "for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." They want to tell Jesus, "stay with us," because your presence is full of encouragement and comfort for us; "Stay with us" because your words make our hearts burn.

And the third milestone is when "Jesus was at the table with them, took bread, and broke it. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him." According to Biblical scholars, this relates to the Eucharist. With a simple gesture and a simple prayer, he broke the bread and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened: they recognized their risen Lord. They knew that Jesus was alive and with them. Now their hope was restored.

These are three milestones that the two disciples relied upon so that they were able to find joy in their faith. And these are also milestones that you and I, the disciples of Jesus must rely upon so that we are able to be faithful to God, and walk in joy.

First, we have to rely on the Scriptures. Just as the two disciples did, we live in this world with happy and sad incidents, with worries and hopes, with the happiness and pain of our own as well as the people around us. There is no different life. If there is, however, something different, it would be that these same incidents are viewed in the light of the Scriptures. This light helps us to see life in a different way, not gloomy, not sad, but full of hope because it is the light of the risen Christ. So, for Christians, without the Scriptures, we either cannot, or at best will struggle to find the meaning of our lives in this world.

And in addition to reading and listening to the Word of God, we need a life of prayer. Prayer helps us communicate with God, who loves us and saves us. Like the disciples, may you and I often ask the Lord to please stay with me because “it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.” I am very weak. My life is like a sunset, but not a solar noon; I really need you, because only you can save me, as no one else can. Stay with me.

And finally, it's the gesture of the breaking bread, i.e. the Holy Eucharist. When we celebrate the “breaking of bread”, we receive Jesus Christ into our hearts and souls. Then Jesus lives with us every single minute, every single second, and accompanies us on our journey.

My Brothers and sisters. I believe that if each of us will try to go through this experience, like the two disciples did, to take time to listen to the Word of God and try to view every incident in the light of the Scripture, to eagerly pray that God will stay with us, and to attend Mass and receive the Eucharist, these milestones will help us to gradually rediscover the joy and hope of the Gospel in our Christian life.

And if so, our footsteps, hopefully, will not be the footsteps from Jerusalem to Emmaus, heavy and disappointing. On the contrary, they will become the footsteps from Emmaus back to Jerusalem – the footsteps of joy, proclaiming the good news of the resurrection of Christ Jesus....

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April 2020