

### **Third Sunday of Easter A2023**

Let me start this homily with an anecdote. In one of the pilgrimages I did to the Holy Land, I had the privilege to visit the town of Emmaus. The supposed site of the revelation of Jesus to the two friends is today run by the Benedictine monks of the Abbey of Abu Gosh, a French Foundation.

As we were celebrating the Mass, I thought about what happened to the two friends as our Lord appeared to them on the road. As they sat at table for dinner, our Lord revealed himself to them at the breaking of the bread. Their eyes opened and they understood better than before the sense of the Scriptures about him. The memory of the two friends reminded me also of the tragedy of human life with its ups and downs, joys and sadness, happy moments and bad memories.

The two friends on the road of Emmaus were overwhelmed with sadness and disappointment because of the events that happened in Jerusalem with regard to the passion and death of our Lord. They were inconsolable and alone. It was as though the world stopped to exist for them. Perhaps they left their village and went to Jerusalem with a dream of a bright future for their country and themselves following the teachings and the actions of Jesus. But, with his death, all was over: broken dreams, broken hearts. Now they were going back to their village conversing about all that.

I believe that each one of us can recognize himself in those two friends with our broken dreams, disappointments, sadness and negative experiences of life. Like those two disciples, we feel sometimes alone without anybody to console us about our broken dreams. Like them, we are wandering in the road without purpose, empty and lost.

And yet, in an invisible way, our Lord is with us, accompanying us in these moments and sharing with us the meander of our life. That is what the two disciples had experienced. As they were struggling to make sense of the events of Jerusalem, they experienced that when the mysterious traveler was talking to them, their hearts were burning within them. It was as though a medicine was poured over their wounds so that they got the peace of heart.

That is exactly what the word of God does when we open up to God and offer him our problems and difficulties. Spiritual experience has taught us that the word of God is a powerful means that gives us strength and orientation in times of difficulties. It allows us to stay calm and stand aright in the ways of the Lord in spite of hardships. It comforts us with the perpetual presence of the Lord who never leaves us alone. God travels with us on our own roads to Emmaus.

There is a popular story that goes like this: "One night a man had a dream. He dreamt he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one belonged to him, the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand, he noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it: “Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you’d walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don’t understand why when I needed you most you would leave me.”

The Lord replied, “My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trials and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.”

Now, let us come to this wonderful moment of sharing the meal. The meal is always a wonderful moment of sitting together with people in sharing with them who we are and what they are. It is a privileged moment of approaching people, of spending some quality time with them in order to know them a little bit better. Our Lord chose that moment to reveal who he was. He was not any traveler, but truly the risen Christ who was with them while they were struggling with their disappointment and bitterness.

Would they not have invited him, they would have missed such a great opportunity of blessing and consolation. The Gospel says that once they discovered that it was the Risen Lord, they went back to Jerusalem that same day to tell the other disciples that our Lord is alive. There was no way of keeping for them such a wonderful experience of the revelation of our Lord. They became true missionaries and witnesses of the resurrection of our Lord.

That meal our Lord had with the two disciples is the symbol of the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, our Lord gives himself to us in order to strengthen us on our pilgrimage. If we have the eyes of faith, we can recognize our Lord coming to us in order to console us and encourage us to keep going and fighting on this journey of life. In a few minutes, we will come to the table of the Eucharist to receive our Lord in order to live and continue the journey. We have to prepare our hearts for such an encounter with our Lord.

Let me conclude with the words of Cardinal Cantalamessa: “Jesus remains with us in two ways: in the Eucharist and in his word. He is present in both: in the Eucharist under the form of food, in the Word under the form of light and truth. The word has a great advantage over the Eucharist. Only those who already believe and are in a state of grace can receive communion; but everyone, believers and nonbelievers, married people and divorced people, can approach the word of God. Indeed, to become a believer, the most normal route is that of listening to God’s word.”

**Acts 2: 22-33; 1 Peter 1: 17-21; Luke 24: 13-35**



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