

Acts 2:14,22-33, Psalm 16:1-11; I Peter 1:17-21; Luke 24:13-35

It is hard to see when your head is down. Sometimes you don't see what is right in front of you. One day when I was walking home from elementary school, I walked right into a tree. Not a small tree, but a huge oak tree in the middle of a neighbor's yard. I didn't see it. My head was down and my mind was on the bad day I was going through. Already down having a bad day, walking into a tree didn't help.

The disciples on the road to Emmaus most likely also had their heads down in discouragement over the events of the past few days. Their friend and the one they "Hoped would redeem Israel," had been arrested, tortured, and crucified. And besides all that, they explained to the one who joined them on the road, "it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, 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. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see."

For us, who know the end of the story, the empty tomb is Jesus' resurrection and victory. But for the disciples on the first Easter morning, the empty tomb was a mystery and the words of the angels were not enough to liven the hopes of the two on the road and keep them in Jerusalem.

Their heads were down and their minds were reeling. They may not have run into a tree, but it might have felt that way. No wonder they couldn't see Jesus.

It is in this state of grief, confusion, sadness, wondering, mystery, disappointment, discussion and debate that Jesus comes to the two on the road. He joins them on the journey where they are and walks with them. Although Jesus knows what they are talking about, he asks them questions. He wants to hear from them and offers a listening ear.

Jesus does the same for us. He comes to us every day as we journey this road of life. He comes to us no matter what our mental state or direction in life. Whether our heads are down or spirits are up, Jesus comes to listen and be with us.

Our own lives and the witness of God's Word reveal that the spiritual life is a journey.

Our world is certainly on an interesting COVID-19 journey. **The good news is that where there is a journey, there is God.**

When Jesus comes beside us on the journeys of our lives, he doesn't force himself on us but invites us to an honest reflection of our reality and listens to what is on our minds and in our hearts. Again, Jesus knew what the two on the road were discussing and debating, yet he wanted them to share and to know someone cared enough to listen. They told their new companion the story of Jesus. They knew all the details save one vital truth - Jesus was living. He was alive. He not only was alive, he was standing right before them, walking with them; they just couldn't see him.

In their sharing they confess, “We had hoped he was the one to redeem Israel.” “We had hoped” seems to reveal that hope was in their past not their present. I wonder how many things we have hoped for that didn’t happen or has yet to happen.

We had hoped our daughter would be healed.

We had hoped our marriage would last.

We had hoped our children would return to the faith.

We had hoped our pastor would have noticed our absence.

We had hoped the Coronavirus would have ended by now.

We had hoped the cancer would not have returned.

We had hoped...

When hopes are lost dreams are often discarded and it becomes harder to see clearly.

Again, Jesus came to them as he comes to us, right where we are.

We are told the two disciples are on the road to Emmaus. I find it interesting that the location of Emmaus has never been confirmed. Scholars have thoughts and ideas, but the actual village of Emmaus has been elusive. With this in mind, I have heard it said that the road to Emmaus could mean “the road to nowhere.”

Thus, we can say, the two disciples are without hope on the road to nowhere when Jesus comes and walks with them. They may be on the road to nowhere, but they are on the road with someone and that’s what matters. Where there is a journey, there is God. Moreover, within the word “nowhere” are the two words (now here). It may seem at times that we are on the road to nowhere, but the Risen Christ is now here with us as a listening companion.

On the journey, Jesus moves from listening companion to interpretive guide. He moves from listening to the words of the disciples on the road to interpreting God’s Holy Word to them. Luke tells us, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures.” What an amazing homily/ Bible Study this was.

I believe we get a glimpse of Jesus’ homily in our first reading in Acts. Peter is preaching. As he preaches, he not only proclaims the Risen Christ, he proclaims the Risen Christ as foreshadowed by David in the Old Testament found in our Responsorial Psalm 116. Most likely Peter got his inspiration from hearing about Jesus’ great sermon on the road to Emmaus. Hear these words again and imagine Jesus making the connection between David’s vision and himself as he interpreted and opened the Scriptures to them on the journey.

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven,
raised his voice, and proclaimed:

“You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem.

Let this be known to you, and listen to my words.

You who are Israelites, hear these words.

Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God
with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs,

which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know.

This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God,
you killed, using lawless men to crucify him.

But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it.

For David says of him:

*I saw the Lord ever before me,
with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.
Therefore my heart has been glad and my tongue has exulted;
my flesh, too, will dwell in hope,
because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld,
nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption.
You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.*

My brothers, one can confidently say to you about the patriarch David that he died and was buried, and his tomb is in our midst to this day.

But since he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he abandoned to the netherworld nor did his flesh see corruption.

God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses. Exalted at the right hand of God, he received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured him forth, as you see and hear.”

By the time Jesus concluded opening the Scriptures to them, they arrived in the village. We are told that Jesus kept going as not to impose himself on the others. But they insisted on inviting Jesus to stay with them. Jesus does not force himself on us, but desires that we invite him into our lives and homes. How different the world would be if we, like these two disciples, insisted on inviting Jesus into our homes and on the journeys of our lives.

Now, in their home, Jesus moves from guest to Host. He is invited as a guest, but sitting around the table, he becomes the host or leader of the house. He is the one who takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it and gives it to them. As they receive the bread, their eyes are opened and they see it is Jesus. In His mercy, Jesus reveals himself to them in the breaking of bread.

What a dynamic and profound role the Eucharist is meant to have in our journeys of faith. God uses everything in our journeys, but He chose to especially reveal himself in the breaking of the bread.

The rest of their evening was filled with joy and thoughts of their journey with Jesus. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?” That very night, overjoyed and hope-filled, they were compelled to go back to Jerusalem and recount to the other disciples “what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.”

What a journey. What amazing things can happen “on the way” with Jesus. No matter what road we may find ourselves on, Jesus comes to be with us. He comes to be our listening companion, our interpretive guide, our revealing host, and our compelling sender.

The story of the Road to Emmaus has been a powerful witness throughout the Church's history. Not only of the significance of the Eucharist, but for the whole Mass, the worship of God's people. Jesus' journey with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus was so significant that the early church modeled her worship after Jesus' movements along the way. Our Worship continues the same pattern the disciples encountered on the road with Jesus over 2,000 years ago.

Listening Companion: As we gather to sing, pray and confess our sins, Jesus is our Listening Companion. Jesus is with us and meets us right where we are.

Interpretive Guide: As we turn our attention to the Liturgy of the Word, Jesus is our Interpretive Guide. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus opens the Scriptures to us that our hearts might burn within us that we might come to know him in and through his Holy Word.

Revealing Host: As we enter into the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Jesus is our Revealing Host. Through the priest, Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it and offers it to us that our eyes might be open to the gift and truth of the Risen Christ in our midst. The Host is a leader of a household or gathering and the Eucharistic bread of life. The host (Latin: hostia) means sacrificial victim. The consecrated Host is the Real Presence of Christ. The Catechism states, “The Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life...In the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.”

Compelling Sender: Once we have received the Eucharist with our eyes and hearts open to God's love and mercy, Jesus, our Compelling Sender, sends us forth as missionaries of the Good News of the Risen Christ to the world.

I have read and studied Luke's story of the two on the road to Emmaus many times before, but this is the first time the image of the Mass and Christian worship seemed so evident. While it has been a challenge not gathering for Mass these past several weeks, especially over Holy Week and Easter, God is with us always. Wherever we find ourselves on the journey of life, Jesus comes to meet us right where we are. In the Mass and in our daily lives, Jesus listens to us, guides us, reveals himself to us and sends us out to be his hands, feet and heart to the world.

May we help each other on this journey of life to embrace God's love and see the Risen Christ among us.

I will pray for you and I ask that you pray for me.

God bless you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Deacon Steve

P.S. There is a great study on the Eucharist on www.formed.org. It is called: Lectio: Eucharist by Brant Pitre. Below are details on how to access the study. I also want to invite you to our Wednesday evening on-line discussion group on this program. We will be discussing the second presentation this Wednesday. If you are interested, please email me and I will send you a link to our Go To Meeting at 7:00p.m.

Here are steps on how you can access FORMED and find the program.

1. Go to www.formed.org
2. Click the "Sign Up" box in the middle of the screen
3. Click the "I Belong to a Parish or Organization" box (Third box)
4. Type "99801" in the Box under "Create an Account"
5. Click on "Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary", Juneau, AK
6. Click "Next"
7. Create an Account by putting your name and email in the boxes.
8. Click "Sign Up"
9. You will receive an email from FORMED giving you access to all their on-line materials.
10. Once you are in FORMED, search **Lectio: Eucharist** or Dr. Brant Pitre and you should see the program. Click on the program and start watching. The first video is 39 minutes long and has three parts. We will watch the second video for Wednesday, April 29th. There are 11 videos in the series.

If you have any questions or have trouble accessing FORMED, please email me or give me a text or call at: akdeaconsteve@gmail.com, 907-209-7005