

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 6, 2008

Acts 2: 14, 22 - 33; Ps 16; 1 Peter 1:17 – 21; Luke 24:13 - 35

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The church places before us today the most treasured of all the stories of Jesus' resurrection appearances.

Two of his followers were heading out to the town of Emmaus some seven miles from Jerusalem. An unknown traveler joined them for the journey and they did not realize it was Jesus. The two disciples were sad and downcast. The whole story is an insight into the journey through life that each human must take. Some days it is hard even to get out of bed and face the world. Jesus asks about their sadness and they tell with sorrow the story of Jesus' death and the women finding the empty tomb. Then Jesus, beginning with Moses—that is the Torah—explains the passages that foretell the death of the Chosen One. No doubt, he told the story of Abraham asked to sacrifice his beloved son and when Isaac asked where the animal for sacrifice was, Abraham answered: “God himself will give us the Lamb.” He must have explained the Suffering Servant songs of Second Isaiah which tell of one who would be pierced and killed for the sins of all. We know the reaction of these two disciples: “their hearts were burning within them.”

So when they came to Emmaus, they begged the stranger to come in and stay with them. He did stay and broke bread with them—he blessed the bread and offered the Eucharist—and then disappeared. They returned to Jerusalem to tell the others that they recognized Jesus in the Breaking of the Bread—the early Christian term for what we today call the Mass.

And so it is that we have the story of every Christian, of every disciple of Jesus. We are all on our own journey through life and Jesus joins us perhaps when we are most needy. He walks with us. He talks with us. He explains the Word of God (the Scriptures) to us. He touches our hearts. He lifts us out of sorrow. He helps us to see our life and perhaps our sorrows in a new light. And then, as we gather around the table of the Lord each Sunday, he gives us the Bread of Life to eat. The early Christians always understood the Eucharist to be Viaticum—the Bread that would take us to the kingdom of heaven. They also had this deep sense that Jesus walked with them on their way to the kingdom.

Jesus' last words to that Christian community—“I will be with you until the end of time,” gives courage and joy to the 21st century Christian communities that the Lord Jesus continues to walk with us in our journey to the kingdom. He continues to strengthen us with his wisdom and his love. He continues to nourish us with the Bread of Life and fill us with zeal to spread the Good News to new communities of pilgrims. Alleluia! Let us rejoice in His love.