

Third Sunday of Easter

My beloved brothers and sisters, of all of the stories of the Resurrection appearances of Jesus, this one is my favorite. It is so incredibly rich! The encounter with Jesus with His two disciples, is set in two stages, and is really the paradigm for the form of the Eucharist: First, there is the community: “Where two or three are gathered in my name; there I am present in their midst!” Only, in this instance, these members of the community are fleeing in total discouragement from the community of the Disciples. Nonetheless, Jesus appears in their midst, although they do not recognize Him; because, seeing is not believing, but believing is seeing! They cannot see Him, and recognize Him, because they do not have a properly formed faith in Him. It is only Jesus who can develop this faith and bring it to recognition of His Resurrected reality!

Secondly, Jesus gently chides them, and then breaks open the Sacred Scriptures for them and all of the references in the Old Testament to the necessity of His Suffering and death. It breaks open their understanding of the infinite compassion and mercy of God made visible in His person in His suffering and death and Resurrection. This is the Liturgy of the Word, which is the first part of every Eucharist.

Thirdly, Jesus celebrates the Eucharist with them. This is the meaning of the “Breaking of the Bread!” It is only then that they fully recognize Him, and that is why He now vanishes from their sight: it is in the Eucharist: The Liturgy of the Breaking open of the Divine Word, followed by the Breaking of the Bread, that we encounter the Risen One! No wonder their hearts were burning within them! It is in the Eucharist, wherein I also experience the True, Living, Risen Lord Jesus. It is in my prayer before the Real Presence of Jesus, that my heart also burns within me! The Word of God enflames my heart, the Real Body, Blood, Soul of Jesus enflames my very being!

This Gospel teaches us, that Jesus, the Risen One, is not “perishable”, not shaky, not undependable; but solid, real, and Truly Present. However, it also teaches us that even in our disappointments, our discouragements, our failures, Christ, the True Lamb, is also God the Good Shepherd- He goes after these two discouraged

disciples to bring them back into His fold- and they go racing back to tell the others! Jesus will never abandon us; if we let God into our lives, and we follow Him, He will never fail us! We never, never walk alone, and even though the Church is full of sinners, waiting in the Upper Room for fear of the Jews, nonetheless, this is where we encounter Him!

We are on a journey! We have not yet reached our goal. It is perilous, and long, and many times fraught with dangers and discouragements; but, without Jesus, we are truly alone, by ourselves, without hope! Only Jesus knows the way, not only in general, but also within our unique lives and unique journey! Without Him, without prayer, without the Sacred Divine and Living Word, without the Eucharist, we are truly hopeless, and life is only cruel and pointless- no wonder suicide has reached such epidemic proportions! There is only one way that can save us; there is no other way!

What is this way; it is not a what, it is a Who: it is Christ! It requires of us three things: constant prayer, not just saying a prayer, but being men and women and teens, and children of prayer: daily prayer, especially the Rosary, and The Holy Eucharist. If we are prayerful, we will never, wander away from Christ, because He will always journey with us! In a recent apparition of our Lady, she said: "Those who pray will be saved; those who do not, cannot!"