

3rd Sunday Easter, April 26, 2009

The Church of Saint Ann 5, 7:30, 9:30

Our gospel today is the beautiful story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. It can easily stand as a symbol for the entire Christian life. It begins with two people on a journey. Remember that in the scripture life is often compared to a journey. We are called pilgrim people. Jesus calls us to follow the way. The Early Christians were called followers of the way.

Two disciples were on the way to Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, the problem is that they are walking in the wrong direction. They are walking from Jerusalem. Jerusalem is where it is all happening; the institution of the Eucharist, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, Pentecost. Jerusalem is where we meet the Lord.

These disciples are going the opposite way. Not unlike you and me at times, going the wrong way, round and round in circles, lost a little or lost a lot. Confused, disappointed, discouraged- you've been there and so have I.

Walking away from the Church (gathered in fear) walking away from the resurrected Jesus. Sadly walking away from what could help them the most.

It is precisely at this point that Jesus re-enters their life, unrecognized and unexpected.

Just as so often we fail utterly to recognize him; God may come in the form of a friend, a colleague, or a complete stranger. It may be someone we love, admire, trust or it could be someone we fear, hate, despise or want to ignore. God may come not as a person at all, but in the form of a happening or even an inanimate object.

Through all of these God may have something to say to us, but our prejudices and preoccupations can totally blind us to God's presence, if we are alert.

We might know all the facts of the story, we might have all our theology down pat, but still fail to recognize God's messenger.

It is important for us to realize that even when we are going in the wrong direction, Jesus comes and walks with us. He doesn't force us to turn around or stop us in our tracks, he simply walks with us. We are never alone. Our God is not a God that is aloof, unapproachable, but a God who walks right along with us. This is the way of Jesus. He is with us even when we are going the wrong way.

When do they recognize Jesus? Not when they're telling all the stories, not when they're theologizing, but when they break bread together.

As soon as they do, even though it is in the middle of the night, and night traveling is very dangerous, they immediately get up and go back to Jerusalem to tell the others, to spread the message, to be faithful to their mission.

They turn in the right direction, toward Jerusalem, toward the church gathered in fear, toward Jesus and they move quickly in that direction.

My friends, our church is so wise in telling us that we must gather each week to celebrate the Eucharist, to break bread together. It is in this gathering that we have the greatest possibility of recognizing Jesus and getting ourselves moving in the right direction for the week ahead.

This weekly gathering for worship is essential to keep us together, to help us recognize Jesus walking with us, even when we walk in the wrong direction. God will never abandon us.

This weekly gathering should also encourage us to proclaim the message of Jesus (Easter) as best we can.

The message that good will overcome evil

Truth will overcome lies,

Beauty will prevail over ugliness'

Life will prevail over death

Although we may at times be surrounded by death, ultimately we know that life will prevail – and so in the midst of war and suffering and death we place deeds of love and compassion and life.

In a world of lies, we start to speak the truth.

Faced with evil all around us, we make deliberate acts of goodness.

Surrounded by ugliness, we start calling attention to the beauty we see around us.

We need to spread the message to hope in the face of so much that could cause us to give up hope and our hope will give us the ability to seek goodness , speak truth, point out beauty and chose life.

Ours is no easy task. That is why we gather here each week, around this table – we need to hear the story again told in so many different ways.

We need to be strengthened by the presence of one another and the presence of God among us in our gathering and sharing. We need to have our eyes opened again and to realize that ours is the wonderful mission of proclaiming the good news and we need to go forth from our gather confident and assured that

Good will overcome evil,

Truth will overcome lies.

Beauty will overcome ugliness

Life will prevail over death

That's the Easter message

That's the mission we have to live

That is why we celebrate Easter for a full 50 days and then at the beginning of ever week throughout the year.