

GOSPEL

LUKE 24:13-21, 25-33

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel...Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem;

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

The Gospel from this Sunday, which is the Third Sunday of Easter, is that of the disciples of Emmaus. They were two of Jesus' disciples who, after his death and the Sabbath was past, leave Jerusalem and return, sad and dejected, to their village which was named Emmaus. Along the way the Risen Jesus draws near to them, but they do not recognize him. Seeing them so sad, he first helps them to understand

that the Passion and death of the Messiah were foreseen in the plan of God and announced in the Sacred Scriptures: and thus he rekindled a fire of hope in their hearts.

At that point, the two disciples experienced an extraordinary attraction to the mysterious man, and they invited him to stay with them that evening. Jesus accepted and went into the house with them. When, at table, he blessed the bread and broke it, they recognized him, but he vanished out of their sight, leaving them full of wonder. After being enlightened by the Word, they had recognized the Risen Jesus in the breaking of the bread, a new sign of his presence. And immediately they felt the need to go back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples about their experience, that they had met the living Jesus and recognized him in the act of the breaking of the bread.

The road to Emmaus thus becomes a symbol of our journey of faith: the Scriptures and the Eucharist are the indispensable elements for encountering the Lord. We too often go to Sunday Mass with our worries, difficulties and disappointments.... Life sometimes wounds us and we go away feeling sad, towards our "Emmaus", turning our backs on God's plan. We distance ourselves from God. But the Liturgy of the Word welcomes us: Jesus explains the Scriptures to us and rekindles in our hearts the warmth of faith and hope, and in Communion he gives us strength. The Word of God, the Eucharist. Read a passage of the Gospel every day. Remember it well: read a passage from the Gospel every day, and on Sundays go to Communion, to receive Jesus. This is what happened to the disciples of Emmaus: they received the Word; they shared the breaking of bread and from feeling sad and defeated they became joyful.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Word of God and the Eucharist fill us with joy always. Remember it well! When you are sad, take up the Word of God. When you are down, take up the Word of God and go to Sunday Mass and receive Communion, to participate in the mystery of Jesus. The Word of God, the Eucharist: they fill us with joy.

Through the intercession of Most Holy Mary, let us pray that every Christian, in reliving the experience of the disciples of Emmaus, especially at Sunday Mass, may rediscover the grace of the transforming encounter with the Lord, with the Risen Lord, who is with us always. There is

always a Word of God that gives us guidance after we slip; and through our weariness and disappointments there is always a Bread that is broken that keeps us going on the journey.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- In this reading, Jesus the risen Jesus joins two of his disciples who 'stood still looking sad'. We have all felt sadness, Jesus himself was at times sad, it is part of the human condition. If you are comfortable to do so and without oversharing, can you describe a time of great sadness in your life?
- Jesus' response to their sadness is to give them hope. He breaks open the scriptures with them and then draws them into celebration of Eucharist with him. Do you as Pope Francis' suggests, turn to the word of God and mass to fill you with joy?
- How might you be called by Jesus, to imitate bringing joy onto the life of someone you know who is experiencing sadness?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.