

### Third Sunday of Easter A - Our lives are a journey with the Lord on the road to Emmaus. April 26, 2020

Doubt and disillusionment, discouragement and despair: these are emotions that are common to all of us at some point in our lives. Loss of a job, loss of a loved one, divorce, illness, even the loss of a pet, and now the coronavirus pandemic, any of these things and more can throw us into a tailspin and fill our hearts with anxiety and fear. We think that things will never be right again. We forget that there ever was a thing called hope, and all that we have learned about God's saving grace is nowhere to be found. If ever we knew how to call upon God, it is now only a distant memory from a better and happier time; and even when we need God the most, we turn our backs on God and walk away.

That is exactly the situation in which we find Cleopas and his friend in this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 24:13-35). The two disciples of Jesus are taking a long walk of shock, disappointment and grief. They were walking (eleven km long) from Jerusalem to their home in Emmaus where they belong and back to the life they used to live. The men had heard Jesus' message about the love of the Father and the love we need to extend to others. Life would be so beautiful; the world would be so wonderful if people would only love each other, especially those who need the love and compassion of others. The disciples most probably had witness Jesus's deeds: raising the dead and healing the sick and the crippled. Certainly, they were present when he multiplied the bread and fish for thousands. They were sure that Jesus was the Messiah. But then everything fell into pieces. Jesus was arrested, treated horribly and crucified. The disciples were certain that this could not happen to a Messiah. They had loved this Jesus, and now He was gone. Though on that day, the Sunday, there had been a story that Jesus was not in the tomb. But that sounded far-fetched, probably more wishful thinking than reality. Maybe someone moved his body.

Many of us have been on that road of grief. Our lives had been going well. We were happy and content. We had our plans all set and everything seemed to be fitting into place. Then something unforeseen happened. We were thinking of going to Toronto again to celebrate my mom's 90th birthday this Summer, even my sister in Hong Kong will go too. But now with the home-isolation due to the pandemic, there is absolutely no chance. So many children cannot have birthday parties, even the Queen has to cancel her public parade on her birthday. There's no wedding receptions, no funeral to celebrate life. *"Why? Why does this pandemic happen?"* *"Where were you God?"* When the disciples on the road asked the *Why question*, and had finished their side of the story, the stranger who joined them chided: ***"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, the stranger interpreted to them the things about Jesus in all the scriptures. As they reach Emmaus, they invite him to stay and have a meal with them, and at the breaking of bread, their eyes are opened and they know with certainty that this is indeed Jesus and that all he had said to them on the road to Emmaus was true. They're filled with joy and return back to Jerusalem to tell the others. Yes, when we are preoccupied with the doom and gloom in these pandemic days, we are blinded by the sadness so many deaths and the fear of lost jobs that we failed to see the presence of God in our midst sharing our sorrow and pain. In this Easter season, as in all Easter seasons in the past, we have to celebrate with joy and carry out the mission that the resurrected Christ gives us, to spread His good news to the ends of the world. As Peter quoted David in the First Reading (Acts 2:14, 22b-28): ***"I saw the Lord always before***

*me...so that I will not be shaken...You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.”*

When we ask the *Why question* we also need to listen to what the Word of God is saying to us. Scripture tells us that there is infinitely more to life than the here and now. It tells us that we are made for eternity. It tells us that our loved ones have transitioned from this life to the next because physical life ends but the spiritual life remains. Scripture tells us that God can and does write straight with the crooked lines of our lives. We need to be exposed to the Word of God to deal with our lives. We need to read the Bible. We need to come to Church and hear how the passages of the Bible relate to our lives. **No matter what happens in our lives, in the life of the Church and in the world, do not walk away from God. “Were not our hearts burning when He explained the scripture to us?”** the disciples said on the road to Emmaus and they return back to their circle of believers in Jerusalem. Our hearts will also burn when we realize that everything that happens in our lives can and will be used by God as part of His plan. He comes and stands beside us in our moments of despair, calling our names, waiting for us to recognize him, to realize the truth of his words, to be renewed in faith so that he can use us to spread His good news again. In countless ways, He comes among us, never demanding, but patiently waiting for us to open our eyes and our hearts to see him. It may happen in our prayers, it may happen in the reading of Scripture or in listening to a friend; it may come as we walk along a road. He is there. We have only to be willing to have our eyes opened in faith so that we can see the Risen Christ for ourselves. We can then feel his presence and his peace, giving us hope. As Peter’s sermon on hope in the 2nd Reading says (1Peter 1:17-21): **“Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.”** **Do not let our faith be shaken. The gift of Emmaus awaits us. Wherever we are on that road, pray that when the Risen Lord comes to us, our eyes will be opened so we can behold him in all his glory; and then, renewed in faith, run to tell others the Good News.**

Our faith journey has its fair share of ups and downs, but in times of darkness or desolation, we cannot deny what we have seen in the light and experienced in a sure moment of grace. Every bit of suffering has a purpose, giving us a motive for living a deeply religious life, even now during this worldwide pandemic. Though our life of prayer goes through phases, at times filled with many words and at other moments in complete silence, Jesus wants us to learn to trust that he is always near even when it may not seem so. By loving Jesus in obscurity and darkness, our faith springs to life. We have all been there with those disciples on that road. We will probably be there again. But we will never walk alone. Jesus is always walking with us, calming us, soothing us with His Word and strengthening us with His Eucharist. **Our lives are a journey with the Lord on the road to Emmaus.**