

Easter Season-Wednesday and Thursday of Easter
Octave Homily (based upon Luke 24:13-48)
The Road to Emmaus

- I was speaking with a friend about the Gospel passages we read on Wednesday and Thursday of Easter Week. These passages tell the story of two dejected disciples of Jesus heading back to Emmaus after the crucifixion of Jesus. The Gospel passage is frequently referred to as “The Road to Emmaus”. I asked my friend for his thoughts on this reading.
- He said the passage reminded him a bit of our Mass today. You might call it the first Mass AFTER the resurrection.
- He explained the two disciples, although not initially knowing it, were walking down the road with the crucified and risen Christ (at that time the two only saw a stranger). At the start of our Mass today we walk down the church aisle with the cross (the symbol of the crucified and risen Christ).
- As the two disciples walk the road the “hidden” Jesus speaks to them and teaches them using passages from scripture. At Mass today, that is our Liturgy of the Word – where the Lord speaks to us through our three readings at Mass.
- Later that day, the “hidden” Jesus joins the two disciples at table, breaking bread, blessing and giving it to them. At that moment, their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus. Who opened their eyes? – The Holy Spirit. Jesus was really present with them and He is really present to us at each Mass at the Holy Eucharist. By the power of the Holy Spirit, our eyes are opened and we recognize Jesus in the consecrated bread and wine.

- My friend concluded the explanation by saying: look what happened after the meal – the two disciples went off to tell others the “good news”. And isn’t that the sending we get at the end of each Mass when we are told: “The Mass is ended, go in peace to love and serve the Lord” (or in other words: Get out of here – go bring the love of Christ to others!!)
- My friend had it right. The Emmaus story is our story too. It speaks to the different ways we encounter Christ, especially at the Mass. It speaks to what we are called to do after that encounter, how we are to live our lives as followers of Jesus.
- I think the Emmaus story gives us two important lessons about our lives as followers of Jesus.
- First, we are all travelling along a road –just like those two disciples. Our life with Christ is a journey, isn’t it? Notice in the Emmaus story they are travelling together, two of them - talking about things, sharing their experiences, their disappointments, their hopes with each other.
- The Emmaus story tells us *we are meant to journey together. We need each other.*
- We need each other’s love and support. We need each other to think things through; to give advice; to share our joys; console each other in our disappointments and sorrow. We need each other to bring each other Christ’s love.
- You know when those disciples first met that man, on the road; they saw a stranger, not realizing they were in the presence of Jesus. Our lives are not that different.
- We often forget that many times Jesus comes to us in the presence of others.
- So this Easter week, ask yourself this: Who in your life is bringing you the love of Christ? Who is Jesus acting

through to let you know He is there? Letting you know He cares? Maybe someone close to you – friend, family. Maybe even a stranger.

- We are meant to journey together. Wouldn't our journey be lonely, our lives empty without friends, family, fellow parishioners.
- Yet there are people who are journeying alone right now – at least they feel they are. There are many lonely elderly, sick and homebound. Many struggling with anxiety and depression.
- It is so important as Christians to find them and reach out to them.....we are meant to journey together.
- The second lesson from the Emmaus story is a lesson on how to deal with disappointments and setbacks.
- There will be disappointments on our journey – it is unavoidable. Did you ever have your heart set on something? Were you ever so sure of something and then it doesn't happen – doesn't work out as you thought?
- Then you know how those two disciples on the road to Emmaus felt. They were disappointed to say the least. We find them walking *away from Jerusalem* – the place their hopes and dreams were supposed to come true. “We were hoping He would be the one”, the Messiah, who would establish His kingdom, free Israel from the oppressive Roman rule. Instead, they were walking away from their dreams; downcast, feeling all was lost.
- But what happens? Notice the Gospel starts with the words: “That very day”. What day was that? It was the day of the resurrection, the empty tomb. On the day those disciples gave up hope, turned their back on their dream, went off downcast – on that very day, Jesus rises and goes to be with them. And that changed everything – set everything right again!!

- What is the lesson for us? When we encounter disappointments and setbacks on our journey, you are allowed to sulk and mope and be downcast (like those two disciples) – it's part of being human. But you are allowed to do it only for “that very day”. One day only.
- Then remember, Jesus is there waiting for you. Go to Him. Let Him in like those disciples did – invite Him to stay. Meet Him in those around you; find Him in scripture; meet Him in the Eucharist – He is there in all those places.
- He is there to help us see the disappointment differently. To see the setback not as an end but as a new beginning – just like His crucifixion.
- The road may be different, even difficult, but in each disappointment and setback in our life the Lord reminds us this: It is a journey, there is lots of road left to travel. I am with you. Remember who you are. I made you; I love you. You have great value. Setbacks don't define who you are or change your essence. I am counting on you for the most important job on this journey – bring my presence, my love to the world.
- That's what those disciples did when they turned around and headed back to Jerusalem. The Emmaus story reminds us that is our call also.