

Third Sunday of Easter, A, April 26, 2020

Today's Gospel story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus has always been one of my favorite stories but not just for me but two of the greatest artist of all time, Raphael and Caravaggio. They have painted this scene. (*Google them and you can see for yourself.*) In fact Rafael has two paintings of it. These artists try and I think succeed in showing the amazement of the two disciples as they recognize Jesus as He dines with them or as St. Luke, who tells this story, describes the Eucharist as the **"Breaking of the Bread."**

The first question to ask ourselves is why were these two disciples leaving Jerusalem? I think they were in pain as they are disillusioned, disappointed, angry and forlorn with the Lord. They thought Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ and when Jesus was crucified and buried, their hopes and dreams were crushed. It was now three days later and they had refused to believe the women when they spoke of the empty tomb or the appearances of the Risen Christ. Instead they decided it was time to go home, pick up the pieces of their lives and start all over again.

As we reflect on this Gospel I think we can identify with these two lost disciples as we may also feel and a bit abandoned by God as we sit quarantined in our homes now for over a month due to the *corvid-19*. If we do feel this way, let us look at the Gospel story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus to help us in our disillusionment.

On Easter Sunday afternoon, the Risen Lord walks with the two disciples on their journey home but all they could see is a stranger walking with them. Without faith they cannot see the Risen Lord. But, notice Jesus has not abandoned them at all. He is with them on their journey home but because they have no faith in Him they cannot see Him. The stranger begins to explain the Scriptures to them. Slowly their hearts begin to

burn within them, and so much so, that by the end of this Gospel they return to Jerusalem and cry *"We have seen the Lord!"*

What has changed them? I think it was their invitation: *"Stay with us, the day is almost over."* Once they invite the stranger into their minds and hearts they recognize Jesus in what He says and does. He *"breaks bread with them."* *"Jesus took the bread, blessed it and broke it and gave it to them to eat."* (These are the very words we use at mass.) If you look closely at this scene, it is not much different than what we do at Mass. Jesus speaks to us in the Scriptures and then feeds us with his Body and Blood. Yes, I know we cannot share the Eucharist these days but we can still hear His Holy Words and we can still invite Jesus to *stay with us*.

Seeing Jesus on the road to Emmaus reminds me of St. Paul on the road to Damascus to find early Christians and persecute them for their faith in Jesus. Jesus knocks Paul to the ground and says to him: *"Why are you persecuting me?"* Paul asks: *"Who are you, Sir?"* Jesus answers him by identifying Himself with the early Christians: *"You are persecuting ME."* So do we not only recognize Jesus in the *"Breaking of the Bread and the Scriptures"* but also **do we see Jesus in each other?** Perhaps a story might help with the idea of seeing Christ in each other.

One day a boy and an old lady were sitting on a park bench. They were both conversing with each other as they ate their lunch. The boy went home and told his mother that he had lunch with God and that he was surprised how old God was and that God was a woman. The old lady went home called her daughter and said she had lunch with God and that she was surprised how young God was and that God was a boy.

How about us do we have lunch with God?