

The Road to Emmaus – What keeps us from seeing Jesus?

Headline: We are all on a journey – a journey toward holiness. A journey toward Heaven. How often are we so consumed with the things of life – joys, sorrows, stresses, confusion, apathy – that we don't see Jesus? Nor do we even look for Him? He is always there, we need to find ways to look for Him to make our journey more fruitful and more peaceful.

Objective: The Road to Emmaus is a story often used as a metaphor for the Mass – we are walking along (into the church) mentally busy, perhaps stressed, or otherwise distracted. Then a person walks up to us and starts explaining the scriptures (liturgy of the Word). Then he reveals Himself in the breaking of the bread (liturgy of the Eucharist), and finally they return rejoicing (being sent from Mass).

However, it can also be thought of in a larger context – that of our lives. Perhaps used to describe a journey of transformation. It represents a process where an individual moves from despair, doubt, or misunderstanding to a sudden realization, spiritual awakening, or renewed clarity and purpose.

As St. Augustine said: “They had lost faith, lost hope. They were walking along, dead, with Christ alive; they were walking along, dead, with life itself.”

How often do we take the time to recognize the good things that Jesus has put in our path? Do we see the face of Jesus in those things? Or, how often do we face challenges that we aren't happy about? Do we recognize that Jesus is there with us, saying, “Do not be afraid. I am with you. We will get through this. I promise it will be alright, and you will thank me later.”?

We will often find him when we least expect him, and we may not even recognize him. He is present to us in our deepest selves, in other people, in all the situations of life, and in a very special way at Mass.

Where do you see Jesus on YOUR “road to Emmaus”? Are you even looking for Him?

Song Suggestion: Open my Eyes

Bible and Catechism Readings: –

Deuteronomy 4:29

Yet when you seek the LORD, your God, from there, you shall indeed find him if you search after him with all your heart and soul.

Luke 24: 13-35

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.

He asked them, “What are you discussing as you walk along?” They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?” And he replied to them, “What sort of things?” They said to him, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place.

Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced

that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see.”

And he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?” So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, “The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!” Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Matthew 28:20

And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Catechism 30

“Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.” Although man can forget God or reject him, He never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness. But this search for God demands of man every effort of intellect, a sound will, “an upright heart”, as well as the witness of others who teach him to seek God.

Saint: St. Augustine - One of the most prominent Doctors of the Church. He frequently reflected on Emmaus, noting that Jesus wanted the disciples to understand the Scriptures so they might recognize Him in the breaking of the bread. His own life was a profound “road to Emmaus,” a restless spiritual journey that ended in encountering God's living truth. A couple of his points:

- In Sermon 232, Augustine famously argues that having Christ within your heart is vastly superior to having Him as a physical guest in your home. He teaches that when we have faith, we carry Christ with us wherever we go, transforming our internal lives.
- In Sermon 235, Augustine observes an eloquent paradox: Jesus—who is “The Way”—was walking alongside the disciples, yet they were not truly on the right path because they had lost hope. Through His questioning, Jesus guides them away from their disappointment and helps them comprehend who He really is.

Vignette: – Mike had been carrying more than anyone around him realized. His oldest son had stopped attending Mass after leaving for college. His daughter had accepted a job across the country, and the distance weighed heavily on him. At work, layoffs had left him with twice the responsibility and constant anxiety about what might come next. Even at home, he found himself distracted—physically present but emotionally exhausted.

Prayer had become little more than checking a box before bed. Sunday Mass felt familiar but not transformative. More than once he found himself asking, “Lord, where are You?”

One evening his wife suggested they spend an hour in Eucharistic Adoration. Mike almost declined. He was tired, and he doubted an hour of silence would change anything. As he sat before the Blessed Sacrament, nothing dramatic happened. There was no sudden revelation or overwhelming emotion. Instead, his restless heart gradually became quiet. Into that silence came a simple realization: Jesus had never stopped walking with him.

He saw Christ in his wife's quiet encouragement, in the Father's Team brother who called just to check in, in the priest's homily that seemed written just for him, in the coworker who thanked him for a small act of kindness, and in every Sunday Eucharist he had attended distractedly.

None of those moments had seemed extraordinary at the time. Now they appeared differently. Christ had been present in all of those instances. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, Mike realized that his greatest problem was not that Jesus had been absent—it was that disappointment and worry had kept him from recognizing Him.

Leaving the church that evening, his circumstances had not changed. His son still had questions. His workload was still heavy. The future remained uncertain. But Mike had changed.

The road before him looked much the same. But now he knew he was not walking it alone.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

1. Meditate on this verse – “but their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.” What is keeping you from seeing Jesus? Too busy? Distracted? Lack of trust?
2. The disciples were afraid and confused and were walking away from Jerusalem -When you are confused and afraid, is your tendency to run toward God or away from him? Do you even think about Him at all?
3. The stranger (Jesus) starting interpreting scripture with them -What is your relationship with the Scriptures? Have you let the word of God sink deep roots into your life – good times and distress?
4. Then, their eyes were opened and they recognized Him -In what ways do you need God to open your eyes to His presence in your life? To His blessings in your life? To the providence that might be in a circumstance or a situation that you're experiencing right now that maybe you resent?
5. Finally, the 2 got up, and returned to Jerusalem to tell the others about their experience -What bold action is God inviting you to take in your life right now? How is he inviting you to trust him more fully and follow him beyond your comfort zone?

Resources:

1. A (great) Reflection - https://www.dynamiccatholic.com/the-eucharist/road-to-emmaus.html?srsId=AfmBOorBvql2iyC19_NVp14jPJ75P6HNJbst7wPMamYZYRD1-NadDO5m
2. Our Road to Emmaus - <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/our-road-to-emmaus/>
3. The Road to Emmaus - <https://thecove.org/blog/lessons-from-the-road-to-emmaus/>
4. Recognizing Jesus - <https://www.catechist.com/journey-to-emmaus-recognizing-jesus/>

Action Plan:

This week, intentionally practice recognizing Christ's presence.

1. If not already, spend time finding Jesus in the Scriptures through daily reading and reflection.
2. Commit each morning to look for Jesus in the faces of the people you interact with.
3. During the day, when something interesting happens, take a moment to thank Jesus. Or, before beginning a (difficult) task, ask Jesus to walk with you.
4. We have heard of the phrase WWJD – What would Jesus do? Each day, try to turn that around a bit – WDJJ – What DID Jesus do? Reflect on your day – how was Jesus active during my day?
5. As Catholic men, we are called to become "companions on the road," helping others recognize Christ through our presence, encouragement, and witness. Reach out to one person who may need someone to walk with them rather than solve their problems.

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