

Cycle A 3rd Sunday of Easter

Reading 1 ACTS 2:14, 22-33

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed: "You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem. Let this be known to you, and listen to my words. You who are Israelites, hear these words. Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know. This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him. But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it. For David says of him: I saw the Lord ever before me, with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed. Therefore my heart has been glad and my tongue has exulted; my flesh, too, will dwell in hope, because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence. "My brothers, one can confidently say to you about the patriarch David that he died and was buried, and his tomb is in our midst to this day. But since he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he abandoned to the netherworld nor did his flesh see corruption. God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses. Exalted at the right hand of God, he received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured him forth, as you see and hear."

Reading 2 1 PT 1:17-21

Beloved: If you invoke as Father him who judges impartially according to each one's works, conduct yourselves with reverence during the time of your sojourning, realizing that you were ransomed from your futile conduct, handed on by your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb. He was known before the foundation of the world but revealed in the final time for you, who through him believe in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Gospel LK 24:13-35

That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus' disciples 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 Christ 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 bread.

“...they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive.”

In today's Gospel, St. Luke wrote one of the best-known resurrection stories as a journey with Jesus. It contains many verbs describing movement: the going, drawing near, the walking ahead, vanishing, the returning. This is clearly a story about a journey...But it's not a only journey of the feet...it's a journey of the heart.

Two disciples, Cleopas and possibly his wife, are traveling home on Easter Sunday to Emmaus, 7 miles from Jerusalem...They knew about the crucifixion and death of Christ, and heard the reports that somehow, He was alive. But, they were returning home without yet hearing about encounters with the Risen Christ. We can imagine they were experiencing considerable fear and confusion: a mix of *“I never thought it would end that way”* and *“how could He still be alive?”* and *“what do we do now?”* These two fugitives appear to be utterly lost. But, it was precisely during their disorientated and off-course wanderings that Jesus journeyed with them right where they were.

Spiritual guru and best-selling author Barbara Brown Taylor shares in her book, *An Altar in the World*, how she learned to encounter God by embracing the sacred as a natural part of everyday life, and yes, even in suffering. She admits that being lost has happened to her many times: while setting out to be married and ending up divorced; while setting out to be healthy and ending up sick; while setting out to live in New England and ending up in Georgia. In the midst of her wayward wandering she discovered that when she got lost, she found things that she would have never discovered if she had stayed on the planned path. Maybe most telling is her belief that getting lost is actually a spiritual journey. It's not a detour, but another path. It's not only a wound, but it is also a gift. It's not a place where God is absent, but rather a place of divine revelation with Jesus. She concludes, *“God does some of God's best work with people who are truly, seriously lost.”*

We could say that is a pretty fair assessment of today's Gospel with the disciples adrift after their leader was crucified and with Him, their dreams were undeniably crucified as well. It's not clear whether they were intentionally moving toward something or simply

escaping the Jesus-nightmare that had prompted their departure from Jerusalem. But, what changed them, reversed their flight into the unknown, transformed their loss to gain, and triggered the most famous U-turn in the Gospels was Jesus Himself.

When the Risen Christ encountered the two lost disciples on the road to Emmaus, He seemed at first to be a stranger until their hearts began to burn as He broke open the Scriptures for them. And then when they reached home, “...*he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them.*” And finally, their eyes were opened...Jesus was alive! They couldn’t wait to return to Jerusalem to share their encounter with the Risen Christ and to find out that Jesus had visited many in their faith community as well. It sounds like the disciples went to Mass.

We pray that no matter what road we are on, no matter how lost we might be, that the gift of journeying with Jesus in our lives each day will help us discover God’s dream for us...our true treasure...God’s unconditional love!

[Rain Down begins softly playing]

Over the last several months countless people around the world have no doubt felt truly, seriously lost...they have been consumed by wars....it’s hard to hear that 56 wars and major conflicts are active in the world today! They have been praying for divine intervention. They have been begging for Peace!

Pope Leo, after a Holy Week in which he ramped up his “Peace” rhetoric, on Easter Sunday announced an uncommon prayer vigil for peace. So, on Saturday after Easter, after praying the rosary, Leo directly addressed world leaders on behalf of the

"millions and billions of men and women, young and old, who today choose to believe in peace, caring for the wounds and repairing the damage left behind by the madness of war."

His was a relentless appeal for world leaders to abandon the pursuit of power and to work for peace:

"Enough of the idolatry of self and money! Enough of the display of power! Enough of war!" the pope said. "True strength is shown in serving life."

As followers of Jesus, we are seeing people across the globe being ravaged by war today. And yes, we believe Jesus is journeying with those poor lost souls. Pope Leo and all of our Church leaders and Father Juan have been asking us to listen and learn about what Jesus, the Gospels, and the Church teaches us about war and peace, because we cannot gather under this cross, this image of suffering and violence, and believe that God only loves us. God loves all people...completely...He created us and stands in solidarity with all who suffer violence.

So, inspired by Pope Leo in this season of Easter renewal, we cannot forget those who are begging for Peace! We must serve life! At the end of Mass, Cullen Larson will tell us more about his workshop next Sunday after the 10AM Mass that will explain what the Catholic Church teaches us about war and peace in light of Jesus and the Gospel. Are we ready to listen and learn how our faith will grow when we stand in solidarity with those who suffer war?

Let me tell you a brief story about what some of us are questioning today. I was at a wedding yesterday and someone told me about a conversation they had with a friend. The friend said, "I wish Pope Leo wasn't so political." They responded, "He's not being political...he's repeating the Gospel." The retort came, "come on, we know the Old Testament is full of war with God on the side of Israel." At that point they agreed to disagree. BTW, at end of the evening, they hugged as they said goodbye. That's how we should always treat each other, even if we don't agree on everything.

If you have that kind of question, please come to the workshop next Sunday on war and peace, and ask it. You will hear that we Catholics need to learn much more about our Jewish roots to answer those questions. We need to know more about the background of the Church teachings, about history, and about the Bible, like reading the Prophets that Jesus spoke about in today's Gospel....we can't just read the Prophets beginning chapters

about war's anger and hatred and power...we need to continue reading to the end to learn how the world's suffering is a journey where anger evolves to sadness and ultimately to God's compassion and peace. The Prophets are about how we all are interconnected and that God's divine and universal love is real.

Please ask Cullen about his time with Catholic Relief Services when he visited countries in Africa, Europe and Asia, war-torn and suffering from droughts and famines....and why the people everywhere said to him, "Thank You for helping"....and "Don't forget us!"

We pray, may our hearts burn as we recognize Jesus is our companion in all situations, in our joy and in our sorrow. And may we come to know, Jesus is the One who gives us eyes of faith to recognize God is in our lives, and to muster our compassion to live the Gospel building a world of Peace not war!

We pray, may all lost souls who need a life-giving U-turn from war, have us at their side caring for their wounds and repairing the damage of war...may they journey with Jesus, so He is no longer a stranger but is the One who they can come to recognize would never cause or justify the suffering of war, because He loves all of us, His own sons and daughters...

...And, the Church says, Amen!

[Choir sings refrain of Rain Down twice]