

Homily of Third Sunday of Easter, Year A, 2026

Acts 2:14, 22-33; Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-11; 1 Peter 1:17-21; Luke 24:13-35

During Jesus' trial, Peter, crippled with fear, denied three times of knowing Jesus. But the first reading shows a new Peter transformed by the power of Jesus' resurrection. Delivered from his fear, Peter proclaimed the Risen Lord boldly. Peter's story is an encouraging story of hope. We pray that as Easter people, we are transformed human beings.

The second reading reminds us that the blood Jesus shed during his passion and piecing of his side ransomed (freed) us from our futile conduct (our sins and sorrows). We pray that as Easter people we do not in engage futile conducts that put us into bondage.

We read in today's gospel how two of Jesus' disciples, in disappointment and in despair, headed back to their village, Emmaus. For them, to have left everything and followed Jesus for three years had become a wasted time and effort. For that reason, they were downcast. Then, Jesus met them on their way. When Jesus questioned them, they complained, "But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel ..." They had hoped that Jesus was a political messiah and, perhaps, those of them who were his disciples would be the first beneficiaries of Jesus' kingdom.

Three major events took place when the men encountered Jesus. First, Jesus fed them with the word of God to burn their hearts. That is what the word of God is supposed to do to us, burn our hearts. Second, Jesus had a Eucharistic meal with them. The Eucharist opened their eyes and they recognized Jesus. This is what we do during Mass; we receive God's word, then we receive Christ's Body. Third, the men were empowered by their encounter with Jesus. "So, they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem..." The word of God and the Eucharist have empowering effects.

The men had advised 'the stranger' not to continue his journey, but to stay with them because it was nearly evening and the day was almost over. In other words, it was not safe for the 'stranger' to continue his journey at that time. However, after encountering Jesus, they were transformed from fear to courage. They walked back to Jerusalem, about seven miles (eleven kilometers), that night to meet the apostles and disciples and share their experiences of the Risen Lord with them.

Do we notice what happened as soon as Jesus met the men? After the men poured out their hearts to Jesus, Jesus took control. He instructed them and enlightened them. At meal, he broke the bread for them. Let us pour out our hearts to Jesus. May he take control. May he walk with us especially during our difficult moments. A traditional African-American song comes to mind:

I want Jesus to walk with me (2X)
All along my pilgrim journey
I want Jesus to walk with me

In my trials, Lord, walk with me (2X)
When the shades of life are falling
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me

In my sorrows, Lord walk with me (2X)
When my heart is aching
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me

In my troubles, Lord walk with me (2X)
When my life becomes a burden
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me

The encounter of Jesus and the two disciples teach us that hospitality has rewards. Without being asked, the two men invited 'the stranger' to stay with them "for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." They shared their meal with 'the stranger.' Hebrews 13:2 says, "Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels." In Genesis 18:1-15, Abraham and his wife, Sarah, showed hospitality to three strangers not knowing that they were angels. Their son, Isaac, was the reward of their hospitality. In 1 King 17, the widow of Zarephath who fed a 'stranger' she met while gathering sticks to make a fire did not know that she fed Prophet Elijah. Her reward was that her jar of flour did not go empty, nor her jug of oil run dry.

There is no doubt that many people are sick, or grieving, or frightened, or frustrated, or downcast, or despair, or brokenhearted, or confused, or disappointed, or discouraged, or hungry, or upset. Let us invite Jesus to walk with us, stay with us, and take control of whatever that is going on with us.

Let us not go back to 'Emmaus.' Let us return to 'Jerusalem!'

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