

3rd Sunday of Easter - A
Acts 2:14, 22-33;
I Peter 1:17-21;
Luke 24:13-35
Little Flower - 5/4/14

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today's Gospel tells the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. If you listened closely to the story, you could hear our Liturgy embedded within the story. As the disciples walked toward Emmaus, they were discussing all that had happened concerning Jesus. Suddenly Jesus himself joined them and walked with them, but they did not recognize him. After they told him all that had happened, *“beginning, then, with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted for them every passage of Scripture which referred to him.”* On the road, then, Jesus celebrated with them a Liturgy of the Word.

After they arrived at the village, *“when he had seated himself with them to eat, he took bread, pronounced the blessing, then broke the bread and began to distribute it to them,”* and then they recognized him. Later they told the apostles all that happened on the road and *“how they had come to know him in the breaking of bread.”* At dinner Jesus celebrated with them a Liturgy of the Eucharist. In fact, "breaking of bread" was the early Church's name for the Eucharist.

My brothers and sisters, I think the story makes three points.

First, although their hearts were burning within them as Jesus interpreted the Scriptures to them, they only recognized him in the breaking of bread. We see here one of the major differences between Catholics and most other Christians. For most non-Catholic Christians, their Liturgy is only or primarily a Liturgy of the Word. For us as Catholic Christians today, as it was in the time of the apostles, the Eucharist is the heart of our faith and our prayer. In the Eucharist, we are enabled to recognize the Lord Jesus not only in Communion but also in Scripture, others, ourselves, and our world.

Second, today's Gospel reminds us that Church, especially Eucharist, is about relationships. The disciples' shared experience of Jesus deepened their relationship with God and their relationship with each other. In recent years, there has been some debate over what kind of community or church we are called to be: a community of shared vision and values or a community of intimacy. The Emmaus story and the structure of the Eucharist suggest that we are called to be both. The Liturgy of the Word forms us into a community of shared vision and values. The Liturgy of the Eucharist forms us into a community of intimacy. Intimacy here does not refer to emotional intimacy but the intimacy of true love grounded in Christ's love for God and us. *“Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”* [I Cor. 10:17]

Third, the disciples in today's Gospel were on a journey to Emmaus. This journey became for them a journey of faith. Today's Gospel, then, reminds us that our lives are also a journey of faith, beginning with our birth and our baptism and continuing throughout our entire lives. For us as Catholic Christians, the celebration of Eucharist remains the constant in our lives, supporting us on our journey and enabling us to integrate into our journey of faith all the experiences of our lives, both the good and the bad, the holy and the sinful, the beautiful and the ugly, the happy times and the sad times, and the highs and the lows.