

Third Sunday of Easter - Lectionary: 46

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."

Responsorial Psalm - [Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11](#) - R. (11a) Lord, you will show us the path of life.

Reading 2 - [1 Peter 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 - [Luke 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.

Lord, you will show us the path of Life: The Emmaus Road and our Lives as Pilgrimage

Summary

The homily synthesizes theological reflections and scriptural analysis based on the Road to Emmaus narrative (Luke 24:13-35) and associated liturgical readings for the Third Sunday of Easter. The central theme identifies the Christian life not as aimless wandering, but as a deliberate pilgrimage toward eternal life in the "Father's house." This journey is characterized by a transition from the "gloom of incomprehension" to the "light of faith," facilitated by the dual pillars of Scripture and the Eucharist. Key insights emphasize that while the journey is often marked by disappointment and "fogbound" stretches, the Church provides essential tools—sacraments, sacramentals, and the communion of saints—to ensure the pilgrim remains oriented toward their eternal destination. The pilgrimage of life is itself a "refining fire." However, through the accompaniment of Christ in the Word and the Eucharist, the support of the Church, and the inspiration of the saints, the pilgrim heart is formed in grace. The ultimate goal is to "become what we touch," eventually reaching the Father's house where all longings are satisfied eternally.



In the psalm, the refrain was, "You will show me the path to life. You will show me the path to life. And that verse in the psalm continues, "Abounding joy in your presence that delights at your right hand forever." These words of the psalmist speak to us of our pilgrim journey as disciples of Christ. They speak of our eternity. The journey is just not always easy, is it? Our days between this life and the next can feel like a journey full of detours, misunderstood conversations, disappointments that sour or wound the heart, and long stretches during which hope seems to fade. The two men on the road to Emmaus were experiencing this. Because of recent events they were discouraged, disillusioned, confused. They weren't, of course, ignorant of religion, of their faith, but it was in fact their learned biases, personal opinions regarding the teaching of the faith that blinded them. Something the Church has not been unfamiliar with throughout its history.

So here they are discussing and debating about Jesus, whom they thought would redeem Israel, and the events that had transpired. They were mired in the echo chamber of their own reddit thread. They are living the moment without the light needed to interpret it. You can imagine the conversation going back and forth. Then Jesus joins the thread. He joins them in this moment of their journey and listens. Then he begins to speak, opens the scriptures, breaks bread, and turns confusion into recognition and then into mission. Wouldn't it be great if Jesus hopped on social media now and then to clear up confusion?

Christian life is truly a pilgrimage and not one of aimless wandering, but a journey toward eternal life, that is meant to be guided by the light of God's Word and the presence of the Risen Christ.¹² Pope Saint John Paul II emphasized what happened to these two disciples in their encounter with the risen Lord: "*with the Scriptures, they emerge from the gloom of incomprehension into the light of faith—recognizing the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread.*"³

At the heart of their experience is the Eucharistic revealing of Christ. In the Eucharist, he is the perceived stranger on the Emmaus Road who breaks bread and sets the heart ablaze—food meant not merely for strength, but for recognition, teaching us to see and say, it is the Lord. In fact, each of the sacraments are sources of necessary grace for our pilgrimage. In Confession, he is the Shepherd who meets us in our entanglements, frees us from them, washes the mud from our wounds, and points us once again to the path of life. In Matrimony and Holy Orders, he gives a vocation like a staff and a yoke at once: something to lean on, something that pulls us forward, turning ordinary faithfulness into a steady procession toward the Father's house.

It's not enough just for us to come to church, to be faithful in the particular ways that are convenient or comfortable for us, we must be transformed. We're never going to make it to the destination with minimal effort and focus, certainly not with the kind of holiness that God calls us to. A steady procession toward the father's house, just like Jesus on his way to Jerusalem throughout the gospels who was set like flint on the goal is the disposition we must cultivate. He knew what he was there for and he pursued it no matter what the cost.

God not only provides the graces we need through the sacraments. Through the Church and her traditions, we are provided with devotions and sacramentals to help our pilgrim journey stay on track. The rosary beads that flow through our palms and across our fingers as we meditate on the various mysteries of the life of Christ, is an experience of prayer that symbolizes our experience as pilgrims journeying through life accompanied by Christ during which we are transformed. The statues of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and our various patron saints are like sentries who guide us on our pilgrim path. The icons of saints that adorn our walls and help make our spaces sacred, remind us of the holiness to which we are called, inspire us to trust that with God all things are possible. The liturgical year, turning through feasts and fasts, is a holy compass helping to keep our souls oriented when the weather of the world in which we journey can so often disorient and distract. All of it serving to be instruments of God who desires that we remain fully awake to the Gospel truth of our identity, dignity, value, meaning, purpose, and mission.

Scripture reminds us, "*conduct yourselves with reverence during the time of your sojourning*".⁴ We really must understand our lives as pilgrimage. We must be open to the graces and humbly obedient to the guidance given so as to avoid building on the sands of passing things but rather on the rock foundation of things eternal. We cannot measure the success of our days as though deposits of material wealth and

¹ Mass At "Indira Gandhi" Stadium Of Delhi *Homily Of His Holiness John Paul II, 1 February 1986*

² Message for the 61st World Day of Prayer for Vocations 2024, Pope Francis, 21 April 2024

³ General Audience, Pope John Paul II, 15 November 2000

⁴ 1 Peter 1:17

success but rather like storing treasures of virtue and holiness that help us to become what we touch. Even as this path of life is at times brilliantly sunlit and at others fogbound—it is all, the consolation and the desolation that by which God is teaching us how to walk this path, leading our eyes to look up, and our heart to long for a country we have not yet seen.

Though we are unsure of this at times, we do not travel as solitary figures against a blurry horizon of the unknown and uncertain. The communion of saints is our great cloud of witnesses—lantern-bearers in the fog, voices calling from the far side of the pass. And as we keep walking—through peaks and valleys, through questions and quiet, doubt and certainty—God does not merely bring us to a destination; God calls upon the Saints to remind us of how this pilgrimage is a refining fire.

Each Mass becomes another step of light, each prayer another stitch in the torn sail, each work of mercy another stone laid on the path, until Christ's own life begins to take the shape in us, our pilgrim heart beating increasingly in unison with his sacred heart. Formed in grace, we learn to recognize him again and again: in each other, in the Word, and in the breaking of the bread.

As we see in the lives of Cleopas and his fellow disciple, as well as throughout the experience of the apostles during the years they spent with Jesus, we become frustrated, or discouraged, because the reality of what happens doesn't measure up to what we were expecting. This is true for small things - as when an unforeseen traffic jam threatens to make us late for an important appointment. But it is also true for big things. Desperate actions often follow in the wake of a deep disappointment, a fundamental clash between the reality of life and our expectations for life. When life hurts, you have an interpretive choice. Either you treat Christ as absent from your story, or you allow Christ to interpret your story. Emmaus teaches that Jesus does the latter through Scripture and Eucharist—so your discouragement is not the final author of your future.

Jesus wants to adjust our expectations on this path. If we let him do that, it will be a major milestone in our spiritual lives. In three different ways, today's Readings present us with a biblical metaphor for what human life in this fallen world really is. The Psalm explains that God is faithful, that if we stay close to him, he will safely *"show us the path to life, abounding joy in God's presence, the delights at his right hand forever."*⁵ The path to eternal life - that's the metaphor for what this earthly adventure really is. The Second Reading, tells us to *"conduct ourselves with reverence during the time of your sojourning."* We are on our way home; we are pilgrims heading towards heaven, towards our Father's house. The Gospel passage is a living parable for the same truth - Jesus walking with his disciples along the road to Emmaus.

That's what this life is - a pilgrimage, a journey, a path. If we truly see life this way, as it truly is, we will expect what pilgrims expect: joys and adventures, yes, but also hardship, danger, and suffering. But if we expect somehow to achieve perfect happiness with no hardships here and now - then we open the door to constant disappointment, frustration, and deep sadness.

This is the Christian worldview which has two unique characteristics. First, as Christians, we know that we never have to walk alone. We always have the whole Church accompanying us - including the saints, the angels, Christ himself, and the Holy Spirit. Second, we know without a doubt that there really is a worthwhile destination: the Father's house, where all our longings will be satisfied eternally. Without this destination, the journey would be pointless and cruel.

⁵ Psalm 16

These two characteristics also give us the secret to persevering in our journey - and perseverance is not automatic. There is one activity that constantly keeps this Christian worldview clear, fresh, and strong: prayer. If we are men and women of prayer, not just men and women who say prayers, but men and women of prayer.

The Christian can pray, persevere, and find hope even amidst tears and terrible darkness, because we know that Christ's victory will be ours, if we remain in him.

- Ongoing effort to grow in our prayer and sacramental life.
- Ongoing effort to understand and follow Church teaching on faith and morals.
- Ongoing effort to be like Christ in our own lives - in the excellence of our work, the dependability of our character, and the self-sacrificing faithfulness of our relationships.

The US bishops' pastoral reflection highlights the sequence: through the breaking of the bread, hearts are enflamed, and immediately they begin a mission to share the Good News. Christ "disappears into the mission of the Church."⁶ That's the pattern of discipleship: encounter leads to conversion; conversion leads to communion; communion leads to mission. Emmaus is not just consolation; it is commissioning.⁷

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Prayer to Saint James the Apostle: O glorious Apostle, Saint James, who by reason of thy fervent and generous heart was chosen by Jesus to be witness of His glory on Mount Tabor, and of His agony in Gethsemane; thou, whose very name is a symbol of warfare and victory: obtain for us strength and consolation in the unending warfare of this life, that, having constantly and generously followed Jesus, we may be victors in the strife and deserve to receive the victor's crown in heaven. Amen.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Communion of Saints:** The "great cloud of witnesses" consisting of the faithful, both living and dead, who cheer on and guide pilgrims on their journey.
- **Desolation:** A spiritual state where "nothing seems to make sense" and God may seem absent or uncaring; used by God to teach perseverance.
- **Echo Chamber:** A state of being "mired" in one's own biases and opinions, preventing the reception of new truth or divine light.
- **Emmaus:** A village seven miles from Jerusalem; the site of the first post-resurrection encounter where disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of bread.
- **Eucharist:** The "heart of the experience" on the road to Emmaus; the sacrament where Christ is revealed and hearts are set ablaze.
- **Liturgical Year:** The Church's cycle of feasts and fasts that serves as a "holy compass" to keep the soul oriented toward God.
- **Pilgrimage:** The Christian metaphor for life as a purposeful journey toward the "Father's house" (eternal life).
- **Sacramentals:** Traditional devotions and objects (like the Rosary or icons) that serve as "instruments of God" to keep the pilgrim focused.
- **Sojourning:** The temporary state of living on earth while traveling toward an eternal destination.
- **Treasures of Virtue:** The true measure of success for a pilgrim, contrasted with "deposits of material wealth."

⁶ Listen, Teach, Send: A National Pastoral Framework for Ministries with Youth and with Young Adults, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in June 2024

⁷ Listen, Teach, Send: A National Pastoral Framework for Ministries with Youth and with Young Adults, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in June 2024

⁸ General Audience, Pope John Paul II, 15 November 2000