

**April 30, 2017**  
**3rd Sunday of Easter**  
**Luke 24:13-35**

13 Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, 14 and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. 15 And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, 16 but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. 17 He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. 18 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?" 19 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, 20 how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. 21 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. 22 Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning 23 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. 24 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."

25 And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! 26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures. 28 As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. 29 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. 30 And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. 31 With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. 32 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?"

33 So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them 34 who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" 35 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.

### **Background**

This gospel text was one of the possible texts for Easter Sunday. It is also the gospel for the Wednesday after Easter. The importance of this text for the Church is indicated by the fact that it has been chosen to be read again this Sunday.

Execution by crucifixion was reserved for the most contemptuous of criminals. The early disciples were disappointed and humiliated by the fact that Jesus was crucified. Last Sunday's gospel also suggests that they were afraid for their own safety.



The ancient site of Emmaus, Israel 2012 Photo: Bro Alan

It should be no surprise that some of the disciples gathered behind locked doors and others fled the situation. Emmaus was a Roman spa, a place where there would be physical comfort.

The two that were on the road to Emmaus might have been any of many pilgrims who had been to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover and were now returning home. But Luke tells us that these two were disciples. There is some reason to suspect that they were husband and wife. Missionary couples like Aquila and Priscilla were known among the early Christian community (Acts 18:2). John's gospel mentions the wife of Clopas (possibly Cleopas) at the foot of the cross with Jesus' mother and Mary of Magdala (John 19:25). Another reason to think they were a couple is that their invitation of hospitality toward Jesus, at the end of the text, seems to have been made together.

When Jesus joined them, he appeared to them to be a fellow pilgrim returning from the Passover celebration. They were surprised by the fact that he seemed to be unaware of Jesus' crucifixion. The two disciples explained the events of the crucifixion, and of that Sunday morning, as they knew them. They were aware that some of the women had reported the empty tomb, and that an angel had told them that Jesus was alive. Others had verified that the tomb was empty, and they did not find Jesus, nor, apparently, did they find the angel who had appeared to the women. The two also revealed that they were among Jesus' followers, and that they had hoped that he might be the awaited savior. They told all of this to a person who appeared to be a total stranger! At the same time, they were heading out of Jerusalem, away from the other disciples, to the Roman spa city of Emmaus.

From their perspective, this stranger seemed to be able to reinterpret their religious traditions in such a way that the events of Jesus' death were the fulfillment of their tradition. Even with this new understanding of their tradition, they were continuing their journey to Emmaus, unaware that the person walking with them was the risen Jesus. They did not rediscover their hope and faith in Jesus as the Messiah until Jesus accepted their invitation to join them and he broke bread with them. The format of verse 30 is the same as that of the last supper (Luke 22:19), "Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.'"

### Reflection Questions

1. Have you faced a life situation that was dreadful or out of control? How did you respond?
2. Have you ever had sense that God was walking with you? Did you have that awareness during that point of your life, or only later?
3. Have you ever come to awareness that you had been prevented from recognizing God's presence in your life? What were some of the things that prevented you from recognizing God's presence?
4. The two disciples stated that the chief priests and rulers had handed Jesus over to be crucified, but they were hoping that Jesus would be the one to redeem Israel. Have you ever held hopes that were at odds with the civic or religious leaders? Why would Luke include this statement in his account of the situation?
5. How do you think the disciples who were gathered in the upper room felt about the departure of these two?
6. On the road, the two disciples told Jesus not only what had happened in Jerusalem, but also how these events had impacted them personally. How easy is it for you to share with others your doubts, fears, and disappointments?
7. What do you think was the emotional state of the two disciples who were on their way to Emmaus? Why would Jesus want to come to these two disciples?

8. The disciples did not recognize Jesus until the breaking of the bread. Has your participation in the Eucharist brought you to a new awareness of your relationship with God, the church, or creation?
9. What part of this text speaks to you as you hear it today? What do you think God would like to say to you in that text?

<http://il-ritiro.org/gospel-reflections.aspx>.

The reflection and questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. and edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel.

