

THE MANY ROADS TO EMMAUS -- GOD'S PRESENCE IN THE MIDST OF THE PAINFUL MOMENTS OF LIFE.

Reflection for the Third Sunday of Easter, Cycle A

Today, we listened to the story of the two disciples traveling on the road to Emmaus. During their journey, Jesus joins them, but they do not recognize him. Obviously, the resurrected Christ was in some ways quite different from the pre-resurrected Christ. The following two reflections on today's gospel were written by Jay Cormier.

The Many Roads to Emmaus

A mother and father rush their child to the hospital in the middle of the night. They have done everything they could but the baby's fever will not subside. It is a long night of waiting, of trying not to imagine the worst, of second-guessing, of desperate prayers. From their child's room to the hospital, from the emergency room to the waiting room, this young mother and father walk the long road to Emmaus.

*Every one of us has traveled the road the two disciples walked that Easter night.
It is the road of deep disappointment, sadness, despair, anger.
But God assures us, in his Easter
promise, that along those roads he will make himself known to us*

While not a complete surprise, it was still a blow. Her job was one of many that were eliminated in the merger. There would be a modest severance package and some outplacement help, but to find another job in her field at her salary means a move to another city—or she will have to “retool” for a whole new career. So begins her journey to Emmaus.

He had taken a year off from school to work on the campaign. He believed in what the candidate stood for, in the political process, in the principle that one person could make a difference. But after a bruising campaign, his candidate lost. The young campaign worker's idealism also took a beating as he saw for the first time just how ugly politics can be. What's next? He wondered, as he began the next chapter of his life and career along the road to Emmaus.

Every one of us has traveled the road the two disciples walked that Easter night. It is the road of deep disappointment, sadness, despair, anger. But God assures us, in his Easter promise, that along those roads he will make himself known to us. If our eyes are open, we will meet him in his Christ: in the compassion and generosity of others, in the breaking of bread and the healing touch of the sacraments, in the grace and wisdom of his Spirit in our midst. May our hearts and consciences always be open to behold the presence of Christ, our constant companion along the many roads we walk to Emmaus.

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God in the Midst of Our Pain

After much anger and acrimony, a couple divorces. The dream of “happily ever after” would never be realized. They manage to keep their anger and hurt and feelings of betrayal in check to work through the legalities. The moment comes when the divorce is final. The now-ex-husband remembers:

“We stood in the long hallway, and I held her as she cried. Ironically, it was while we were separating that we had one of the most powerful moments of intimacy of our entire marriage. Not a word passed between us, but each of us understood the pain in each other's soul. We cried and hugged each other, and there was holiness in the hug. In spite of enormous changes I was about to undergo and in spite of the anxiety and fear and enormous pain that those changes were causing, I knew instinctively that I was going to be okay. God was present in that hug, helping us let go of the anger and disappointment that my life was not going to turn out the way I had planned it.”

The Gospel of the two disciples meeting the Risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus mirrors the reality that God is with us

in life's most difficult, confusing, desperate moments. God travels with us on our own road to Emmaus; God is present in the broken bread of compassion and healing we give and receive from our fellow travelers. Easter faith is to recognize God in our midst: in our wanting to understand, in our struggle to make things right, in our brokenness. May our Easter celebration open our hearts and spirits to recognize Christ among us in every moment of our lives, in both the bright promising mornings and the dark, terrifying nights.

***God travels with us on our own road to Emmaus;
God is present in the broken bread of compassion and healing
we give and receive from our fellow travelers.***

Do This in Memory of Me

*Was ever another command so obeyed?
For century after century, spreading slowly to every continent and country
and among every race on earth,
this action has been done in every conceivable human circumstance
for every conceivable human need from infancy and before it,
to extreme old age and after it,
from the pinnacles of earthly greatness to the refuge
of fugitives in the caves and dens of the earth.
Men have found no better thing than this to do
for kings at their crowning and
for criminals going to the scaffold:
for armies in triumph or for a bride and bridegroom
in a country church. . .
for the famine of a whole province
or for the soul of a dear lover. . .
And best of all, week by week, and month by month,
on a hundred thousand Sundays,
faithfully, unfailingly, across all the parishes
of Christendom,
priest and people continue to work together
in order to carry out this command,
“Do this in Memory of me.”*

Don Gregory Dix