

**ECHOING GOD'S WORD**  
**in**  
**THE CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY**  
**THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER**  
**April 23, 2023**

**LECTIONARY READINGS:**

**Acts 2:14, 22-33**

**1 Peter 1:17-21**

**Luke 24:13-35**

**God has raised Jesus to life.**

**We need to live up to what we have been given.**

**At a meal, the Risen Lord is revealed.**

**BIBLE BACKGROUND:**

**Luke:**

The community for whom Luke wrote the good news, most likely, was very much like our own. They needed to hear that although Christ was now invisible to them, he was still there guiding, teaching, sharing himself in the very fellowship of the community. We need to hear the same message: Christ may not be visible in his flesh to us, but he is at work in the community with its reflection on the Scriptures, in its eucharistic fellowship, in its work of evangelization.

Every encounter we have ever had with Christ has left us hoping that he would be with us always to teach us as Moses taught the people of old. Jesus surely was a prophet like Moses, the one who had been promised. However, we know that Jesus is more than that. He has even shared the Holy Spirit through whom he continues to do the works of redemption. The gathering of the Church does not only have to hope that Christ will come to do his mighty works. Christ is right there all the time, continuing through us the works of the kingdom. Christ is alive and present in and through the Church community. The Church has gathered around the Table of the Word and the Table of the Eucharist from the very first moment of its existence. And Christ has been there all the time!

No wonder the Church feels impelled to go immediately from that table to proclaim the good News of its experience! We need to tell others what we have heard and seen. We cannot wait until the next day. One would expect us to go to bed and wait for the morning light at least! But, it is so urgent that we set out right away, lest we lose the spirit of the moment. How often dreams and visions of the previous night have evaporated with the coming of the dawn. We cannot afford to have that happen!

A pattern has been established in the story of the disciples on the way to Emmaus. Despite our struggles and our pains, despite our disappointments in life, we nurture some kind of hope that things might be better, that God would do something for us. We have the Scriptures in our midst. So, we turn to them for insight. There, we discover Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man. We encounter the power of his word as the assembly gathers for prayer. In that context, in a community called together by God, in that community assembled to pray - that is where Jesus is to be found, that is where he gives himself over to us for our salvation.

When we are willing to be broken and given to others, we become the living revelation of the presence and power of Christ in the world.

The "A cycle" of Lectionary readings was specifically designed for the preparation of catechumens and for the further instruction of the neophytes. Not only during the phase of their enlightenment but also during the beginnings of their *mystagogia*, the newly baptized are carefully

nurtured with special proclamations from the scriptural treasury of the Church. The story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus is one of the most central to the lives of these “newly hatched chickens!” They know now that Jesus has been at work in their lives all the time, from the very beginning of their existence. They know why they have been called into fellowship with others: that is where Christ reveals himself most effectively. That is where they are fed and sent out!

### **Acts:**

Peter, like all good homilists, connects the experience of his audience with the works of God among them! God sent Jesus among them with divine credentials. But they went so far as to have him killed by the pagans! But God intervened and raised Jesus from death because, in fact, Jesus was God’s Messiah. So there! The Church needs to hear an interpretation of the facts concerning their own lives and concerning Jesus Christ. The Scriptures speak of how God’s works and our lives intersect. The point of intersection is now!

### **Peter:**

Continuing the instruction to a late-first century Christian community, the Letter of Peter speaks of them having been redeemed from their former condition of “futility.” These Gentile Christians need to know what happened for them in the shedding of Christ’s blood. It had its models set in the prior experience of the Jewish people. Redemption was like a juridical action, in which a family member paid the price for setting free a person who had been captured and enslaved by an enemy. Jesus Christ is the brother who has paid the price with his own death. So, we are truly free from bondage to sin.

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. How does our present-day eucharistic celebration resemble the experience of the disciples? What features do we still have that reflect the influence that this story has had on our Liturgy of Eucharist? Is Christ revealed when you have a Mass in your parish?
2. Discuss the role the fellowship of disciples plays in your coming to an awareness that Jesus Christ is present in your life. Does the Church facilitate or stand in the way of your being able to recognize Christ? In what ways do you contribute to the awareness of others that Christ is at work in the gatherings of the community?
3. What urges have you had to share your experience of the Living Lord with others? Have you done anything to share Christ with family and friends, with fellow members of your church community, with some outside the community? Are you disappointed when they respond, like the community at Jerusalem, “Yeah, we already know!”

## **PRAYER**

**Father in heaven, author of all truth,  
a people once in darkness has listened to your Word  
and followed your Son as he rose from the tomb.**

**Hear the prayer of this newborn people,  
and strengthen your Church to answer your call.  
May we rise and come forth into the light of day,  
to stand in your presence until eternity dawns.**

**We ask this through Christ our Lord.**

(Roman Sacramentary: Alternative Opening Prayer, 3rd Sunday of Easter)

## CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

The doctrines or teachings of the Church are derived from the Church's experience of the living presence of Jesus Christ in its midst. In our tradition, we do not simply read the Bible and throw quotations from it at one another (or at others). Our tradition is much more dynamic and organic in its origins and in its development.

The scene from the Gospel of Luke in which the disciples encounter the living Christ as they make their way to Emmaus, and how the Scriptures are interpreted for them, and how they come to recognize him in the "breaking of bread," and how they go back to Jerusalem to share what they have experienced, all this becomes the model on which the Church has come to its reflections and its beliefs concerning Jesus Christ and concerning itself. The whole process assumes that Christ is present among us all the time, that Christ is at work guiding the experience of the Christian community from within, by the power of his Spirit present at the heart of the community.

The whole process assumes that the word of God from both the First and the Second Testament needs to be proclaimed, expounded, and come to serve as a basis for the faith conclusions that will be drawn from the whole experience.

In the context of a meal-prayer (Eucharist), Christ shows himself to have been there all the time: teaching, guiding, comforting, and assuring the disciples. Christ finally reveals himself as the Bread and Wine of the Sacrificial Meal. Christ shows himself to be present in the "brokenness of the bodies and spirits" of the faithful who gather together to worship and to serve.

Over the centuries, the Church community has had many "Emmaus-type" experiences. From each and every one of those encounters, the Church has come away with a new awareness of Christ and a renewed understanding of itself and its mission. The Church expresses this ever-renewed understanding and insight in teachings and doctrines.

For example, in its earliest centuries, the Church had to struggle with new ways of understanding who Jesus Christ really was. New ways of speaking about reality (new philosophical ways of conceptualizing reality) were being applied to the data of the Bible. "Was the Son of God present to the Father before being born as one of us in Jesus of Nazareth? Was the Son of God really equal to the Father in all things?" The great Christological controversies of the 4<sup>th</sup> century led the Church to reformulate its language and its expressions concerning Christ and the Holy Spirit. Our doctrine of the Trinity comes from those struggles and those experiences. The Emmaus model continues to shape our language and our beliefs.

(See **The Catechism: #1373**)

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