

Homily – Third Sunday of Easter A

Our Scripture lessons for today have one common, encouraging theme: No matter what happens in our lives, the risen Jesus is always with us. God is always near to those who seek Him and who want to live in His presence, doing His will.

The first reading, from Acts, is taken from the beginning of Peter's first public proclamation about Jesus and tells us how God raised Jesus from death, thus fulfilling the Messianic prophecies about the promised descendant of David.

In the second reading, Peter exhorts the early Christians to place their Faith and Hope in God Who has saved them through the precious Blood of His Son and Who has raised Jesus from the dead. The Emmaus incident described in today's Gospel shows us a God who will not abandon us when we are hurt and disappointed. The message of today's Scripture readings is that the followers of Jesus are to maintain contact with their Risen Lord through prayer, the Eucharist, and the Bible. The readings also remind us that our belief in Jesus' presence in the consecrated Bread and Wine should help us understand better his presence in the Bible and in the believing and worshipping community. Putting the two appearances (to the Emmaus disciples and to Peter), together, it is clear that the risen Jesus wanted Peter to act as spokesman for him, and that the faithful who seek to follow Jesus should seek his company in prayer, the Eucharist, and the Bible under the direction of Peter and his successors.

Messages: 1) Jesus meets us on our Emmaus Road. The risen Lord meets us on the road to our Emmaus, both in the ordinary experiences of our lives, and in the places to which we retreat when life is too much for us. We, too, have hopes and dreams about better health, healing, financial security, and better family relationships. These often shatter. The story promises us, however, that Jesus will come to us in unfamiliar guises to support and strengthen us when we least expect the risen Lord. Emmaus moments come to us when we meet the risen Christ on our life's journey through rough times.

2) We meet Jesus daily in our life's journey. The Church instructs us to hear Jesus on a daily basis through prayer, through the faithful reading of, and meditation on, the Bible, through our experience Jesus as we participate, even virtually, in the Eucharistic celebration, where the risen Lord gives us Himself as our spiritual Food and Drink, through our personal and family prayers, and through our family meals. When we meet Jesus in the Eucharist and through the Word of God, we commune with him in prayer, and thus renew our relationship of mutual loving service. These meetings, then, enable us to encounter the risen Jesus living in all the people we meet and, in them, to offer our Lord humble, loving, selfless service.

3) Do our hearts burn when we listen to the risen Lord in the Bible? Christ comes to us most clearly in the Word. Vatican II (*Dei Verbum* 21) tells us that Jesus is to be equally venerated in the Eucharist and in the Bible. Therefore, we need to study the Bible, learn the Bible, pray with the Bible, memorize the Bible, meditate on the word of God with burning zeal, and practice what the Bible teaches. It comes to us as a reminder of the fact, at best during this time of uncertainty, that we are the people of the Word, taking it as the guiding and comforting principle of our lives. May we Read, Reflect and Renew our lives in the light of the Word of God!