
WORD MADE FLESH

Third Sunday of Easter
Acts 2:14,22-28; 1 Peter 1:17-21; Luke 24:13-35

Emmaus, the Common Road*

So many of the texts during the season of *Pascha* -- the Christian Passover, feast of freedom, Easter -- speak of recognition, seeing. In our first reading the Apostle Peter, preaching on the day of Pentecost, begins by saying how Jesus of Nazareth was never recognized for his being or for his gospel. He was seen through the lens of fear and thus condemned and crucified. Peter, and all the eleven who gathered on Pentecost, surely included himself among those who had not understood Jesus' gospel. That first step on the path of recognition-- confessing how one has misunderstood--causes the Apostle to turn from the tragedy of this common human blindness to the Psalm 16, the one prayed so often in the synagogue. "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand...You have made know to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence." Peter, the one who denied Christ while warming himself at the fire, has come home to "the ways of life" full of gladness at the presence of Christ in all things. Out of this recognition he calls to his brothers and sisters to recognize Christ, the very *life* of life, in the midst of their own experience. He dares speak with such force in the first portion of the text because he has finally come to glimpse the meaning of the Psalm he has chanted since childhood.

In today's Gospel we are called to accompany the disciples on their journey to Emmaus, a town a short distance from Jerusalem. They are talking about Jesus, but as the text says, their eyes were closed to recognizing the one who had joined them. Their eyes were closed, not due to a divine trick, but because they had yet to recognize the meaning of the gospel they were living. Using the Hebrew scripture, Jesus spoke to them about God's presence and about the gospel of life. Their hearts burned within them, we are told, but still they did not recognize the stranger in their midst. Finally, at table, at the breaking of the bread, the cloud lifted from their eyes and they recognized the meaning of Christ and of what he had taught them about the "ways of life."

This is our common story. We meet Christ on the road daily, discuss both the trivial and important things of life, eat and drink together, and still we do not see. We are the disciples on the road to Emmaus, at best eager to have our image about the meaning of Christ's life and gospel affirmed. We are the disciples on the road to Emmaus, blind to the presence among us. Because the road to Emmaus is our common road, we pray that the clouds lift from our eyes, that we recognize the "ways of life" Christ has made known to us so that we may rejoice in the "full gladness" of God's presence.

David J. Goa

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