



At A Distance - Third Sunday in Easter 2020

“Let’s Take a Walk”

Greetings Saints and Blessed Ones everywhere. I want to thank you again for being with us today, from wherever you are on this beautiful Spring morning. Mona and I are alive and well along with our family, we greet you in a good way from beautiful Southwest Washington.

Now is the time in our celebration of Morning Prayer together where we get to sit back, relax with a warm cup of coffee and see what learnings the Creator has put into our Sacred Stories for us today. One of the things that I like best about the Sacred Stories is that there is often a unique and special message waiting there for each of us to discover. Sometimes we are all hearing the same message... the same Call. Other times the message is unique, customized for just us to hear, know and understand. The Scriptures are alive, and as the Elders remind us, “Creator is not finished speaking

to us yet.” The Learning continues as we listen and think and discover our own, personal meaning in today’s message that I have called, “Let’s Take a Walk.”

The simple beauty of a quiet walk has always been a beautiful way to restore body, mind and spirit. And especially today, amid our COVID-19 induced separation and isolation, a Walk remains one of the few ways for us to get away from things for a bit, recharge our minds, and recalibrate our Spirits. The beautiful simplicity of breathing in and out, arms swinging in a personal cadence that only we can hear; step by step and breath by breath, when we take a walk, we shed what has been bothering us. We open our eyes, ears, and hearts to our surroundings and begin to soak up new sights, sounds and learnings. Sometimes we meet and greet new people along the way. Sometimes animals and birds may join us with a special message from the Other Side.

Then there are those times when we walk with a partner... a companion. We sometimes share the news of the day. Sometimes family events... as we use the quietness and serenity of the walk to strengthen both ideas and relationships.

And it is a walk much like we are describing and remembering that we hear about in this Morning's Gospel Story...The Road to Emmaus. In this story, crafted by the writer that we know as Luke, two companions identified as "disciples of Jesus" are walking together on the Sunday afternoon, later in the day, after Jesus' Resurrection. Cleopas and his friend are walking together on a 7-mile trek from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They are chatting together and a stranger... the unrecognized Jesus, joins both the walk and the conversation. After giving the stranger a bit of an idiot lesson about what they have been sharing together, Cleopas recounts to the stranger the amazing events of the last several days in Jerusalem.

Luke retells the story for us this way.

"Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him. "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and

crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.”

Luke is writing this story from Rome, in Greek for a sophisticated urban audience, about the year 90 CE. 60 years or so after Jesus' public ministry commenced. Luke's writing has several purposes for the emerging Jesus Way. First is to capture in writing the various stories that had been being circulated in the Disciples' oral tradition. Stories passed down person-to person and congregation-to-congregation over the last 60 years. Secondly, Luke is writing to try to support and strengthen the belief of both new and existing disciples, and also to help convince potential converts to Christianity of the merits of following the Jesus Way. Luke is not writing as an objective chronicler historically

here. Luke is writing as an avid supporter of the Jesus Way... a true believer... an apologist, if you will, for the emerging Christian theology and Christology still in its infancy.

Cleopas' retelling of the events to the yet unrecognized Jesus, allows author Luke to summarize some important "bullet points" of the Jesus Way Message that Luke wants to reinforce in the story:

- "Jesus who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and the People." Here Luke reinforces Jesus' traditional Jewish role as prophet, linking the Old and New Testament stories. Then reminds the reader of Jesus' miracle working.
- "How our Chief Priests and leaders handed Him over to be condemned and crucified." This reinforces the evolving narrative that "Jews killed Jesus" rather than the Romans. This narrative is effective now as Christianity begins to become less and less a subset of 1st Century Judaism and more a separate and unique religious pathway.

- “But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.” This allows Luke to redefine the Messianic Hope from Cleopas’ traditional Jewish apocalyptic view of a strong, earthly king... to a more contemporary view as Jesus as Heavenly King and Spiritual Messiah.
- “Moreover, some women in our group astounded us...” In Luke’s writing, women play a much more important and visible role than in the other Gospel writers. This is important to Luke and very unique in his version of the Story.
- Resurrection, Angels and the Empty Tomb. This allows Luke to tell the resurrection story yet again in his own unique way.

And then, basically Jesus says, “Yes” to it all... and proceeds to tell Cleopas and his Companion exactly how Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies all the way back to Moses.

But for me the most amazing and beautiful part of the story of the Road to Emmaus is yet to come. What we have learned from Luke’s story so far is not new. But Luke is taking the opportunity to lay the groundwork of the basic 1st century orthodox Christian message one more time. To make sure

that it is understood and restated clearly, so that we are ready for the new part of the story. The climax of the Road to Emmaus. And here it is.

“As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.”

Here is the beauty, the heart and soul of this story. How did Cleopas and his Companion finally come to

recognize Jesus? Not through his academic retelling of his fulfillment of the prophecies from the Old Law. Not through associating Jesus and some Messianic vision. But as the story ends... with the last sentence... the powerhouse takeaway... “how he became known to them in the breaking of the bread.”

Cleopas and his Companion only recognized Jesus when they encountered him personally and intimately in the beauty and sanctity of the Liturgy of the Table. In this story Jesus and Luke reinforce again what Jesus said and gifted to us at the First Supper on Holy Thursday when he gave us the Sacrament of the Table... Whenever you want me to be with you, uniquely, personally, intimately... whenever you want to actually see me, to recognize me... “Do This in Remembrance of Me.” Do this. Yes study, learn, read... but when you want to come face to face, heart to heart... Do This... and I will be with you.

Amazing what happens when we just “Take a Walk.”