

Sermon: Luke 24:13-35

Today's gospel begins with two disciples walking to Emmaus, while overcome with sadness, loss, and disappointment. They had hoped Jesus, who was crucified, would be the one to redeem Israel.

We don't know much about these two people. We know, however, that they were disciples of Jesus, not from the smaller group of twelve, but from a larger group of people, which included many women. One of them is called Cleopas, and they were going to the village of Emmaus, about 12 kilometers from Jerusalem. We also know that they were talking, with deep sadness and disappointment, about Jesus' death. They had heard the women's account of Jesus' resurrection, but doubt still remained.

A few years ago, we were at a barbecue with friends, and someone there asked me what I did for a living. When I said I was a pastor, they asked me: "Do you actually believe in God, or is the Church just a ritual?" So, I asked them: "Do **you** believe in God?" They said: "I'm not sure. I've never seen him. But, with so many bad things in the world, it's not so easy to believe." I said that, for sure, it would be much easier if God came, from time to time, maybe joined in a circle of friends, not sure God would eat barbecue, but then we could ask some questions and clear up our doubts. Or, if God solved the problems that we ourselves caused, maybe then it would be easier to believe in him. However, that would be **our** way of saying how God should reveal himself.

Emmaus could represent the journey we take throughout life. On our journey of faith, we may sometimes feel discouraged, find no meaning, or even doubt. And we don't need to be ashamed of that.

Jesus welcomes the disciples on the road to Emmaus in their sadness, disappointment, and doubts, even when they don't recognize him. Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, walks also with us, even when we don't recognize him. God welcomes us in our doubts. May that give us more empathy for those who doubt. We are on this journey together, and perhaps by talking, we can make sense of and understand the Creator together.

The disciples on the road to Emmaus expected Jesus to be the one who would redeem Israel, the one who would liberate Israel from the

oppression of the Roman Empire. But the divine who walked among us did not come to take over power. He came instead to teach us and reinforce what the scriptures had already pointed to: a more just and egalitarian way of building humanity.

In the explaining of the scriptures and the breaking of bread, the eyes of those disciples were opened, and they recognized Christ, the resurrected one, the living God.

And immediately they returned to announce that they had seen Christ in the breaking of bread. If I had been there, probably I would have said: Walk 12 kilometers back now? Can we sleep first and go tomorrow? The good news couldn't wait.

God remains present on our journey. God is present in the sacred life of all who share the journey with us. Christ is present in dialogue, in sharing, in the scriptures, and in the breaking of bread, a reference to the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Eucharist reminds us of the eternal banquet that one day we will all share in the presence of the eternal God. The Holy Supper, as we hear in the liturgy, is the remembrance of God's love for us: on the way, at the table, and to the end.

Just as Jesus welcomes us in our doubt and disappointment, he also sends us forth. And we don't walk alone. We are sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit. She encourages us on our journey to be disciples of the living God, disciples who share life and bread, and who stand with those who suffer most, the oppressed.

In the world around us today, pain, suffering, and injustice seem only to increase. There are so many things, that it's difficult to know which one to mention.

This week, the US president posted an AI-generated image of himself as Christ. To me, and many people, this is a blasphemy and a profound offense. But a greater offense, to me, is cutting off the oil supply to a country like Cuba, leaving an entire population with very limited power, food, medicine, and access to hospitals for months. A greater offense to

me is building an economy for the super-rich on the backs of middle- and low-income people. A greater offense to me is starting a war of choice that brings more and more chaos, death, and violence every day.

With the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the World Food Programme warns that in countries already experiencing dramatic situations of famine and lack of medicine and basic assistance, the situation is becoming much worse. For example, in Afghanistan, there are around 16 million hungry people. To reach Afghanistan, cargo ships that previously crossed the Strait of Hormuz now need to go around the entire African continent, then pass through the Strait of Gibraltar, and go to Turkiye. There, the cargo needs to be loaded onto trucks, pass through two more countries to finally reach Afghanistan. This is just one example of the increased cost of sending humanitarian aid to a single country. And there are so many other places, such as Gaza, Lebanon, and Sudan, that urgently need help. People are desperate.

As we heard in last Sunday's sermon, even though the bombs fall far away, we know that something sacred has been broken.

I quote the words of Pope Leo, who has also been attacked this week. He said: "Enough of the idolatry of self and money. Enough of the display of power! Enough of war! True strength is manifested in service to life!"

On the road to Emmaus lies the reunion of doubt and sadness with hope and courage. In the face of death, God manifested himself in the resurrection. Life is stronger than death, love is stronger than hate. And we, with our fears and doubts and our hope and courage, are loved by the risen Christ.

And he sends us forth.

Keep on the journey, keep walking, keep sharing the bread, keep fighting for peace, remain alongside those who suffer, keep fighting back injustice, not with swords, but with courage, words and actions. Christ is risen!

Amen.