

We all know and read about the important persons who write books or tell the story of their conversion on television. They are very public, well-known Christians. But, there are millions of people whose names will never be known to the media to whom the Lord is just as close and just as near.

The first point of the Emmaus story is that the Risen Christ is near to all of us, to every single Christian, because we are all important to Him. As St. Peter says in the second reading, we were all ransomed by His very blood. These two disciples to whom the Lord came were not in Jerusalem. They were on an ordinary road, traveling to a small Jerusalem.

It teaches us that the Risen Christ can join us wherever we are. We do not have to be in the great spiritual centers of the world. The Risen Lord can be part of our life wherever we are. The where of the Emmaus story is a nameless road, really any road, and every road where we are, any point on the road of life as a child, teenager, young adult, parent or senior citizen. It is anywhere in the world of work, whatever our occupation. It is anywhere we are personally, in doubt, in grief, in joy, in consternation, in worry, in distress. Christ is there with us. That is the where of the Emmaus story. The road on which they travel is our road right now and Christ is with us as well.

Evidently, these two disciples did not see the empty tomb like some of the disciples and did not believe the reports they heard. Their way of coming to know Jesus was in the "breaking of the bread". Reflection on the Scriptures and the rite of the Eucharist is how most of us come to know the Lord. We do not have visions, we do not see the Christ physically, and we do not hear our name called by the audible voice of Christ. We come to know the Lord as we enter into the Sacred Scriptures and in the Eucharist as we gather to do what Jesus told us, "Do this in memory of me." Here is where we recognize the Lord is with us.

The message of the Emmaus Gospel is that whoever you are, wherever you are in life, the Risen Lord is near you. We come to recognize His presence in the "breaking of the bread," in the Mass throughout our life.

That is why it is so important to stay close to the Mass in difficult times as well as in good times. We come to the Mass, at Christmas and Easter, in ordinary times and extraordinary times. Here our eyes are opened and we realize that the Lord is really with us all the time, all along the way. Like these two disciples, we can so focus on our own disappointments and problems, on our own preconceptions of how things should be that we can miss the bigger picture. They thought they had found a Liberator but Jesus revealed Himself as a crucified Redeemer. They thought He would save Israel, but Jesus came for the Gentiles as well. They could not understand pain and suffering as part of the plan of God. Jesus showed them that it was.

We too can have our own ideas of Jesus, His message and His Church. When Jesus broke through their blindness with His explanation of the Scriptures, their vision became more clear. The price of recognizing Jesus is always the same: our ideas of Him, of the Church and of the spiritual journey have to be replaced with His truth. When we let go of our private and limited vision, our preconceived ideas, the Risen Lord is revealed.

Here, in the "breaking of the bread," at Mass, it is a grace to be shown. Here, through Word and Sacrament, Jesus teaches us and opens our eyes to the truth that our lives are part of the bigger arc of God's plan. The Mass is our Emmaus where our eyes open to recognize the truth about the Lord and about ourselves.

In this magnificent Easter appearance, in that small town called Emmaus, the Risen Jesus showed those two disciples where He could always be found, in the breaking of the bread, in the Mass.

