

Hearts Burning

Intro. Our new friends who joined us at Easter through Baptism or Profession of Faith are in their third week after the powerful experience of the Easter Vigil: a bonfire; a candlelight service; nine scripture readings about our family history with God; Baptisms, Confirmations and first Communions. It was glorious. They continue to meet in our version of the “upper room” to understand “these things” as one disciple referred to them in the gospel. For these fifty days of Easter, we too are asked to understand what, if anything, resurrection means for us.

I. This story is unique to Luke. Someone told him about it. He captured the mood of the two disciples. We don’t know why the two disciples left town any more than we know why Thomas was absent from

the community. They left *even after* hearing about the women’s visit to the tomb. They were confused, hurt and maybe just needed to get away. Into this moment, the Lord walked with them. He acted as if he didn’t know what was going on. He asked, “What things,” when the disciples described their conversation. We hear the sadness in their voices and can almost picture the pain in their faces. Things were going so well, and it all fell apart. “We were hoping...” expressed deep discouragement. Even the news of the empty tomb didn’t penetrate. The Lord said to them what he often says to us when we feel similar: how foolish we are. He is not angry; just sad we are so reluctant to believe, when we are slow of heart. When the events of our lives are confusing or troubling, we often turn to friends to talk them out, and try to understand. We are not

looking for them to solve our problems, but to explain what we can't see because we are too close to the events. In other words, we are asking them to help *open our eyes* to understand the truth, the reality of our situation so we can move forward. That is what the Lord did for the two disciples; he opened their minds and hearts to understand the scripture that pointed to a messiah who would suffer, die and be raised. Then he acted as if he was going farther but they invited him to share a meal, maybe in exchange for his explanation of "the things." During the familiar words, "Take and eat; take and drink," eyes opened wide, and heart came to life.

On the return to Jerusalem, the story tumbled out excitedly among the disciples. The upper room

might have looked like the locker room of world champions; hugs and tears all around. Their hearts once again burned with hope.

Concl. When have **our** hearts burned enthusiasm or excitement for something or someone? Hearts opened by love have a feeling unlike any other. When our eyes are opened to the Lord the feeling can be the same. We have difficulty recognizing the Lord on the road of our lives. He *does* come and walk with us, as a friend or a stranger. **The best place to recognize the Lord is in the breaking of the bread at Mass, in our upper room. Don't stay away from it.**

Fr. Michael Pendergraft, April 23, 2023