



Daily Reflections

April 24, 2019

Scripture

Luke 24: 13-35

That very day, the first day of the week,
two of Jesus' disciples were going
to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus,
and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred.
And it happened that while they were conversing and debating,
Jesus himself drew near and walked with them,
but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.
He asked them,
"What are you discussing as you walk along?"
They stopped, looking downcast.
One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply,
"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem
who does not know of the things
that have taken place there in these days?"
And he replied to them, "What sort of things?"
They said to him,
"The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene,
who was a prophet mighty in deed and word
before God and all the people,
how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over
to a sentence of death and crucified him.
But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel;

and besides all this,
it is now the third day since this took place.
Some women from our group, however, have astounded us:
they were at the tomb early in the morning
and did not find his Body;
they came back and reported
that they had indeed seen a vision of angels
who announced that he was alive.
Then some of those with us went to the tomb
and found things just as the women had described,
but him they did not see.”
And he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are!
How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!
Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things
and enter into his glory?”
Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets,
he interpreted to them what referred to him
in all the Scriptures.
As they approached the village to which they were going,
he gave the impression that he was going on farther.
But they urged him, “Stay with us,
for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.”
So he went in to stay with them.
And it happened that, while he was with them at table,
he took bread, said the blessing,
broke it, and gave it to them.
With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him,
but he vanished from their sight.
Then they said to each other,
“Were not our hearts burning within us
while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?”
So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem
where they found gathered together
the Eleven and those with them who were saying,
“The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!”
Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way
and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Our Scripture Reflection

The disillusioned disciples on the road forgot something but remembered something else which made all the difference. As the "stranger" reminded them, they had forgotten all they had been taught by Jesus while He was among them, especially about the necessity of His suffering and death before He would be raised up. But, they did remember that He had taught them to welcome the stranger. And when they did that day as the sun was setting, once inside the house He was there, right before their very eyes. One act of kindness made all the difference.

Food for your Journey

There have been many artistic renderings of the Emmaus story, but one of the most famous is "Supper at Emmaus" by Caravaggio. There's no mistaking the fact that Jesus dominates the painting. All the geometric lines in the painting's design point to him. Caravaggio captures the dramatic high point of the story -- the moment, after Jesus has broken the bread, when "their eyes were opened and they recognized him." There is surprise in the posture of the two disciples: one has thrown his arms open in astonishment, and the other is pushing his chair back from the table, abruptly standing up.

Trace a line from the eyes of the two disciples, and the sight-lines direct you to Jesus' hands, to the very place where the scars of the nails would have been visible. But they're not visible. Two fingers on Jesus' right hand are discreetly folded back, covering up the wound. The man to the right can see it, but we can't. As for Jesus' other hand, it's angled away and swathed in shadow. The other man appears to be looking directly at it, but again, we can't see the scar from our perspective.

There's an empty place at the table, at the foreground. It's almost as though there's another chair, just out of the frame of the picture. There's another place at the table. Whose is it?

The place is ours. The artist is inviting us right into the painting, to take our place at the supper-table and share the disciples' astonishment. A fruit basket at the front of the table is balanced precariously on the edge. It's a silent invitation: Come and eat.

But remember this: unlike the two disciples in the painting, we can't see Jesus' wounds. We are not firsthand witnesses to the resurrection, and never can be. Yet the artist invites us to take our place at the table, all the same.

The painting may be viewed here: wikimedia.org. Retrieved October 20, 2016.

A Prayer from the Heart

Dear God, May I always strive to put into practice the teachings of Your Son Jesus. In doing so may I experience His abiding Presence. Amen