

### Third Sunday of Easter (A)

There is a story that you may have heard of. Four men from the same company had been on a week long business trip and on Friday were heading home. They had been delayed and were in a huge hurry, finally clearing the screening lines and running for the plane which was to leave shortly. As they were running down the concourse the second man in the group was looking back for a minute to check that they were all together and ran into a table where a blind girl had been selling apples. The apples went everywhere, but the men all continued to run for their plane. All but the fourth, who seeing what happened, seeing the woman was in tears, sobbing, slowed and then stopped. He turned to look again at the apple stand and the mess that his partner had made and he yelled ahead to the others: "Go on without me. Please call my wife and tell her that I will be late, I will try and get on the next flight. He then returned to the apple stand. He got on all fours, picking up all of the apples, separating them into two bins, the ones that had been bruised and the ones that were still good. He then took out his wallet and put a \$100 bill into the woman's money tray and gently lifted her back onto her chair. He said: "please forgive me and my friends for all the trouble we have caused. I have picked up all of the apples and separated the bruised ones from the good ones. I have put \$100 in your money tray to cover the cost of the bruised apples and for all of the trouble. Please know that we are sorry. As he started to walk away he heard the blind girl say to him in a quivering voice: "mister are you Jesus"? He turned to girl and said, no, I am nothing like Jesus, he is good, kind, caring, loving and would never have bumped into your display in the first place. The girl nodded: "I only asked because I prayed for Jesus to help me gather the apples. He sent you to help me. Thank you for hearing Jesus mister." Then slowly he made his way to try and catch the later flight with that question burning in his soul. Are you Jesus? Did she recognize something in him, did she see Jesus?

I think it is obvious to say that yes, he was Jesus to that girl and the girl recognized Jesus in him not only because she prayed for Jesus to help but because of what he did, his actions. Don't lose sight however that she too was Jesus to him and I don't know if the man recognized Jesus in the blind girl. This I think leads us to the gospel and what recognition means when it comes to Jesus.

In the gospel we have a powerful story, one of a journey where two of the disciples of Jesus are walking to the small town of Emmaus.

The two disciples that we encounter are followers of Jesus, but not of the original twelve. Jesus has been put to death, his follower's hopes dashed. Jesus was someone they thought could be the messiah and yet he was dead. There were reports that he had risen from the dead but really, no one rises from the dead, right? They are discouraged, without hope, without a future; where do they go from here. All is lost.

Then they are joined by someone they don't recognize. What is going on he asks and the two look at him in disbelief: where have you been these last few days? Of-course they walk on together. The stranger will begin to reveal to them slowly who he is through the scripture, showing them how the Old Testament was always pointing to the coming of the Christ and what must happen to him. Their hearts will burn; who is this, stay with us. As they eat, the stranger will bless the bread and break it and give it to them and then they will recognize him, they will recognize him as Jesus. From that point on their lives will forever be changed.

Here are some key points I think we should consider. When Jesus is recognized by these two disciples, hope is restored, courage is created, amazement and joy are born, fear is dispelled, healing occurs. In addition, the journey that they are on to Emmaus is interrupted, the road of sadness and despair is changed and they turn around and return home, back to Jerusalem. There they find others who have similar sightings of the Lord, each with something to report and what happens as all are returning to report what has been seen and heard; a community is born. It will be a community that will spawn the Church, it will be our community.

There is however something more here that we should note for our own personal lives. The road to Emmaus is the road of life for all of us. Good times and bad. What we should realize from the reading is that having an encounter with Jesus and not knowing it can have different results for us rather than having an encounter with Jesus and recognizing him being present to us. There is a total change in the two disciples when they see that the stranger is Jesus. They felt a warmth, something special when he was in their presence, but when they recognized him everything changed. Need we try to be more aware of the presence of Jesus in our lives and how do we go about it? Fr. Timothy Gallagher will comment on this specifically. He will write: "Yes, God reveals himself, but how attentive am I to that divine self-revelation? How often am I attentive to it? Could I, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus be in the presence of the self-revealing God and not know it? Not realize what God was saying to me? How open were my eyes to grasp that presence.

Where will we find him? Where will we see him? The gospel will help us here as well.

We will find him in scripture. We will find him in the Eucharist, we will find him in the actions of others, in prayer and we will find him right here in the Church.

I am often amazed how God speaks to me in the scriptures, when I sit with a few verses and read them over and over and then stay quiet. I am overjoyed when I look back at the end of the day and think of the times I encountered others and saw the Lord in those interactions. I am forever changed more and more when I receive the Eucharist. I hopefully am becoming more like him and I long to touch him, to be healed by him when I receive him. I continue to be comforted when I place my burdens upon him in prayer or feel his presence in the silence.

Take the time to find Jesus personally present in your life, recognize where he is leading you, what he wants of you, what he wants to say to you. Let him alter your journey and bring you hope, healing, courage and joy. The road to Emmaus is the road of life, but it is also a road where Jesus is encountered and recognized. Don't live your life without seeking to recognize his movements and presence. Look for those Jesus moments when you can say more than, weren't our hearts burning?