

# **The Dashed Hopes On the Road to Emmaus**

**Homily by Dcn. Gerard**

What a difference the presence of Christ made in the lives of those two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Before meeting Christ on the road, they were going away from Jerusalem, their eyes were downcast, because they had been hoping for the redemption of Israel. They stopped their journey because day was almost over. But after recognizing Christ they immediately returned to Jerusalem, their eyes were no longer downcast but opened, instead of dashed hopes for the redemption of Israel their hearts burned within them. Even though they had stopped the journey when nightfall approached, they now set out at once to return to Jerusalem. That is the difference that the presence of Christ makes. That is the difference the presence of Christ makes in our lives when we focus on Him instead of on the negative and the difficulties.

We have all travelled a road to Emmaus, in one way or another. We have all had our hopes dashed like these two disciples. We are the disciples on the road to Emmaus. As Christians Christ has joined us on the road and He has opened the Scriptures to us so that we can see our crosses, or our dashed hopes taken up in the plan of God. As Catholics we have asked Christ to spend the evening with us and have recognized him in the breaking of bread. And we say, “The Lord has been raised indeed”. We know Christ is not only present with us, but He transforms us, renews us, recreates us, restores our hope and joy just as he restored the hope and joy in His disciples on the road to Emmaus.

We encounter Christ every time we celebrate the Eucharist just as these two disciples did two thousand years ago. The Scriptures are proclaimed and explained in the light of Christ. Our eyes are opened to a new way of looking at reality by the Word of God. We recognize Christ in the breaking of bread, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. This does not mean that Christ is not present in many other ways. The Real Presence means Christ is present in the fullest sense in the

Eucharist, substantially present, in his Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. Then we receive Him physically through Holy Communion.

We have all travelled the road to Emmaus at some time in our lives. We have all experienced hopes or dreams that have been dashed in some way or another. How have our hopes been dashed today by the threat of the Covid-19 virus? It could be said the disciples on the road to Emmaus experienced the first Mass. Who would have thought even a few months ago that 'a virus' would rob us of our great communal celebration of Our Lord's Paschal Mystery? But as disciples of Christ, we have with technology, evolved to allow us to virtually participate in Holy Mass. What we still have not overcome is how to receive Christ physically during these virtual encounters.

The pandemic may have postponed our physical reception of Our Lord's Body and Blood, and I do mean postponed, as we will overcome this virus, working together, and bonded together in Christ's presence and hope. One of the ways I have experienced, to endure this postponement, is to replace the physical communion with a Spiritual One. While for our human side it is not the same but it is an encounter with our Risen Lord that can allow us to be in communion with Him, acknowledging His presence in a Real way and giving us that hope and strength that Our Lord gives us with through our normal Holy Eucharist.

During the virtual Mass we are participating in, after the celebrant has received the Body and Blood of Christ, we altogether recite the following Prayer of Spiritual Communion.

My Jesus, I believe that You are in  
the Blessed Sacrament.  
I love You above all things,  
and I long for You in my soul.  
Since I cannot now receive You sacramentally,  
come at least spiritually into my heart.

As though you have already come, I embrace You  
and unite myself entirely to You;  
never permit me to be separated from You.  
Amen.

- St. Alphonsus Liguori, 18th century.

What a difference the presence of Christ makes in our lives. Our eyes are opened to a new way of looking at reality by the Word of God. We recognize the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. May the presence, hope and love of Christ give us the strength, and faith to guide us through our journeys of life.  
Rejoice in our Lord