

Fr Ryan Homily 4/23/23

Read: Acts of the Apostles 2:14, 22-33; Psalm 16; 1 Peter 1:17-21; Luke 24:13-35

So I totally understand at this point in 2023 like referencing the Lord of the Rings, well it's maybe not like outdated but they're like 25-year-old movies now, but it always like a cheat code for a priest to do that. All priests used to do this when the movies came out which makes sense because priests are a bunch of nerds; we love this stuff. But I'm comfort myself by saying they're on like every top 100 top selling books of the last century, so we're cultured nerds. But we love this stuff. The story really is a reflection of the Christian faith. And here's the setup for the Lord of the Rings. So it starts in this place called the Shire which is where like the Hobbits live. And the Hobbits what are they devoted to? They are devoted to peace, they are devoted to the sense of contentment, they are absolutely comfortable, completely safe and they're incredibly secure. And then this one key figure shows up in their lives and he has news, and the news is they are not as safe as they imagined. That their world, their way of life, their peace, their very lives are insecure and are being threatened at that very moment. And so the two lead characters, Frodo and Sam, they need to leave home. In fact they spend the rest of the story away from home and they're traveling, they're walking through this world which is so dangerous for them. It could break them at any moment. And I was thinking about those two, Frodo and Sam, when I was reading the gospel for today because you have these other two people, and they are walking. It's Cleopas and some say that the other one is his wife because Mary the wife of Cleopas is mentioned at other places in the gospel so it would make sense that husband and wife were walking home together at the end of the day. So it's Cleopas and Mrs. Cleopas and they're leaving Jerusalem though. They're leaving the other disciples. They are returning home. Because you get the sense here that they're giving up. That they're not just going home for the night, they're going home for good. That they are leaving the other disciples and going back to their lives pre-Jesus. Before they ever met Him. That they're going back to the Shire, if you will. This place of comfort and safety but really it's only a perceived comfort because unfortunately here, just like for Frodo and Sam, it means going back to an illusion. Going back to a way before you met Jesus that's just an illusion of security. And sometimes we need to be reminded that security in this world is an illusion. Certainty is a mirage. That we think we can go back to the way that it was

or retreat to when it was earlier in life and maybe bad things hadn't happened. Just like maybe Cleopas and his wife were doing. And I think that's what it was like for Frodo and Sam on their journey because so often they would have this thought and I imagine we could identify with them. They think I just wanna go back to the Shire. Like I just wanna pretend that there isn't so much evil out in the world, and that I haven't been given a role to play in overcoming that evil. I just wanna go back to where it's safe. So Cleopas and his wife, that's what they're doing in the gospel, but we know as disciples of Jesus, what do disciples do? Disciples let go on purpose of their sources of security. We let go. But sometimes a disciple, any disciple – ourselves too- we just wanna retreat. We wanna go home. We wanna go back to where it's safe because in this world outcomes are not certain. And we don't know where Jesus will lead us. We don't know what He might ask of us. But we do know that this world can hurt us. And so when Jesus says go out and be my disciples in a dangerous world, a world of uncertainty, we can do what Cleopas and his wife did and just turn our backs and go home. But so lets then ask the question what should be normal for a Christian? Like what should our lives normally be like? And St Peter says it in the second reading today. It's 1 Peter Chapter 1 and he has this line - conduct yourselves reverently during your sojourn. So he uses some words we don't use often, reverently sojourn. The word sojourn, I think there's a better word from the original language Peter wrote in and that word is exile. Conduct yourselves reverently during your time of exile. During your time of being not home. Cause that's what life is for the Christian, a life spent not home. So what do we have to do? He says live this life well. That's what Peter means when he says conduct yourselves reverently. Reverently we think only means like kneeling in church with your hands folded and praying. But reverently means thoughtfully. Reverently means intentionally. It means not carelessly. St Peter is saying do not live this life carelessly but this life you're living you're not home. Remember that! Normal for the Christian is not home. But just because we're not home doesn't mean that we have to have these insecure lives. As long as we have this one thing. If we have this one thing we can walk through this world that is insecure, that can often be dangerous for a Christian. If you have it you can walk through this world securely. And it's the one thing that Cleopas and his wife don't have. They're walking home because they don't have this thing. They even talk about it. So Jesus shows up and they're walking along the way, and he asks what are you talking about? Are you the only one who hasn't heard?

Heard what? Heard about Jesus and all that happened to Him. And then they say these words and it reveals what's going on in their hearts. But we had hoped. We HAD hoped. We were hoping, past tense because we don't hope anymore. Cause they had placed their hope in this specific outcome that Jesus would come and redeem the world in a certain way, and it didn't happen because He was killed. And when we didn't get the outcome we hoped for now we're done. Now we're returning home. We're walking away because we lost hope. But I think it's important to say even at this point they could've chosen to hope. Like that was still an option because they say right after besides all this some women from our group went to the tomb and the stone was rolled back and the body they did not find. And they saw a vision of angels telling them He is alive and other people verified this. Like hope was an option for them. Like the story wasn't done but they still chose to turn back. They were still downcast after hearing all of that. Because Cleopas and his wife based their hope on outcomes that they wanted. And hope is not based on outcomes. Hope is not this sense of positivity. Hope is based on a person and that's why St Peter says today you have faith and hope not in outcomes, you have faith and hope in God now. That's Peter in the first reading, cause there's a lot of St Peter this weekend. Peter says, and he's quoting King David, the Lord ever will be at my right hand. He's with me therefore I shall dwell in hope. Because our hope is based on a person. It's Jesus the Lord. In fact my favorite definition of hope that I always like to share with people. What is hope? Hope is trust in another extended into the future. That's what hope is. Hope is trust in another extended into the future and as Christians we know who that person is. Christians are called to have this hope because for the Christian walking through a world of insecurity and danger not knowing if good things or bad things are around the corner, not knowing how things are gonna turn out, we have hope because your hope is trust in Jesus extended into the future. Hope is not a wish that things will change. Hope is trust in the one who never changes. And so Cleopas and his wife they are not home, they are trying to go back home, but even there they're not alone. They're walking in a dangerous world, but Jesus is with them. He shows up they just gotta recognize Him. Like He's right next to them. So going back to Frodo and Sam and that story, there's a scene that comes at the end of the second movie and it's devastating because here's Frodo. He is the ring bearer. He is the one charged with saving the world. This incredible responsibility. This task placed in his hands. And here is Sam, he is the helper of

the ring bearer. He is like Simon of Cyrene to Frodo as Jesus carrying the cross. And Frodo is absolutely beaten down; he's just tired, he's worn out. And He says to Sam, this is from the movie, he says I can't do this Sam. Sam looks at him, just this source of encouragement, but he says I know. Like he doesn't argue, he doesn't say it's fine he says I know. It's all wrong. And maybe this morning Sam isn't just speaking to Frodo there. Maybe Sam is speaking directly to you as well. Because for whatever reason you're like Frodo here and you're struggling to hold on, you're losing hope, and you're saying I can't do this anymore Sam. I don't think I can keep going. And here is Sam, this Simon of Cyrene for you, this source of encouragement and he's saying I know. It's all wrong, we shouldn't even be here. And maybe you feel like that maybe not just in this moment but in those great moments of grief in your life. Those moments when you're like I just wanna turn back. I wanna go back to before, to before all the bad happened. Just to hear Sam saying I know we shouldn't even be here. But he goes on and says it's like in the great stories Mr. Frodo, the ones that really mattered. They were full of darkness and danger and sometimes you didn't want to know the end because how could the end be happy. How could the world go back to the way that is was when so much bad had happened? He says but in the end it's only a passing thing, this shadow. Even darkness must pass. A new day will come and when the sun shines it will shine out all the clearer and those were the stories that stayed with you that meant something even if you were too small to understand why. But I think Mr. Frodo I do understand. The folk in those stories had lots of chances of turning back only they didn't. They kept going, they kept walking because they were holding onto something. And then defeated Frodo says what are we holding onto Sam? Sam looks at his friend and he says that there's some good in this world, Mr. Frodo and it's worth fighting for. And it's worth fighting for. Cause here's the thing, when we are away from home, we're away from security, walking in a dangerous world, hope is the virtue that keeps us going, that keeps us walking and fighting and J R R Tolkien, the author of those books, says Lord of the Rings is a Catholic story. Like so Tolkien says there is some good and that we didn't put it in the book or in this scene. Tolkien knew that good has a name. There's some good in this world and it's worth fighting for. Tolkien knew the name of this good - His name is Jesus. The only one who is good. Who entered into suffering, who entered into death, who left His home to walk with us so we wouldn't walk alone here. And there is some good in this world and it's worth fighting for because you do not

walk alone. You trust in Him, that He is here now, and He will be here until the end. Right, He's here now and He will be here until the end. We have hope until the end. Right so don't turn back because there will come a moment for every one of us where hope isn't needed anymore. The moment will come for every one of us when we will no longer need hope because in that moment seeing Him face to face. In that moment and then for all eternity we won't have hope because we'll have Him. We won't have hope because He will have us. And after this world of danger and insecurity and not knowing how things are gonna turn out in this life, there will come a time when hope is gone and all that's left is Him, is Jesus. Home isn't what's behind us, home is where we're going. And we will finally secure it after walking in a world of insecurity because of Him.

Amen