

## "Emmaus"

Homily of April 14, 2002

by Fr. Brian Timoney

---

There is a worldwide movement that takes the name "Emmaus" for itself. It's actually an ecumenical offshoot of the Catholic Cursillo movement. It promotes and facilitates personal growth in Christian commitment and Christian action. And certainly very heartening to see such a worldwide movement of spiritual growth among Christians. Now, this movement achieves its goal by finding people to reflect, in a community setting, to reflect on their own lives and on what is happening in the world, in the light of the gospel message, a reflection that would lead to a renewed personal commitment and a renewed commitment to go out and to spread the good news to other people.

This whole movement takes, not only its name "Emmaus", but its inspiration from the story that we have just heard. In the story there is community. It begins with two people sharing experiences, supporting one another. Their hopes for a new Israel had been shattered. The man that they had hoped would lead a revolution had been crucified. All seems lost. Nothing seems to make any sense. And they are in a very deep, deep depression.

They are then joined by a third, a stranger, and he helps them to reflect on their Jewish scriptures. Now, no doubt, they knew the scriptures very well. But, obviously, they had never reflected on them in a critical and a prayerful way. And this is what this stranger helped them to do. They, then, offered him hospitality, invited him to share a meal. And, as they shared this communal meal together, their eyes were opened. They began to see things in a completely new way. What had been utterly senseless now began to make some sense. They recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread, and He not only helps them to understand the past, but He gives them hope for the future, hope that they will be His disciples. Then, as a result of all this, they immediately turn back, go back to Jerusalem, to spread the good news that Jesus is alive.

To some extent, I would suggest, we are, all of us, on an Emmaus journey. We may be perplexed by events in our own lives, disappointments, loss of a job, failure, collapse of a relationship, shattered dreams, betrayal by friends. We are certainly very, very deeply disturbed by things that are happening in our own Church. We are deeply disturbed by the lack of peace in our world, especially in the Holy Land. Everything, indeed, may seem very, very dark. And we may feel as helpless and as hopeless as those two disciples did. If so.... if so, we need community. We cannot fight depression alone. We cannot make sense of things alone. We need to lean on one another for support. We need to search the Scriptures together to see what answers they may have for us. And

then we can go out and spread this good news.

And today, right here and now, we have good news. We have adults amongst us who are making a renewed commitment to Christ through the sacrament of Confirmation, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, Who will open up their eyes to the truth of the great message of Jesus Christ. And they are a wonderful example to all of us today of seekers, those who have gone out and searched for the truth.

So, all of us need to seek community, in prayer groups and Bible study groups, adult education classes. But above all, we need to seek community right here at Eucharist. Sunday worship, Sunday Eucharist, should never, never be from a sense of obligation that comes from some Church law, but rather of obligation that comes from a love of Jesus Christ and from a real consciousness that we need this companionship; we need one another; we need to be in community. "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there I am among them," Jesus said. It is here above all that we share the Scriptures, that we reflect on them. And it is here above all that our eyes are opened in the breaking of the bread, in the sharing of the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion. Here, at Eucharist, Jesus is no longer a stranger. We begin to know Him in a more intimate way, to see that His life did have profound meaning, that it did not end in failure, but rather in a transformed life. And it is through this communal experience of Eucharist, reflection on Scripture, prayer, and shared communion that we will find new meaning for our lives, hope for the future, and transformation of our experience of Christian life.

And, finally, this communal experience of Eucharist will give us the courage and the strength to go out and spread the good news to others. So I suggest to you today that we walk this Emmaus road with renewed faith and hope.... and commitment!