

3 Easter A—April 6, 2008
Luke 24:13-35
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Back in 1991 or 92 Sandy and I were driving up to Alexandria, VA to see Virginia Theological Seminary, and we found ourselves quickly approaching Alexandria and Washington on the DC Beltway. How many of you have driven on the DC Beltway? In retrospect, driving in Miami is good training for driving on the beltway. Driving in Atlanta is excellent training for driving on the beltway

Having spent most of my life in Jacksonville, originally and appropriately named Cowford, jokingly referred to a "South Georgia", I had very little training and even less preparation to drive on the DC beltway. And on that particular day was beginning to feel a bit like Jed Clampett, tooling along while cars were whizzing by me on either side.

I started seeing signs of the impending bridge which would dump us down into Washington itself (and that was the last place I wanted to be)! Finally in a sense of panic, frustration and growing fear I yelled, "Jesus, give me a sign"! And as we rounded the corner there was a big green sign hanging over the road that said, "Seminary Road, 1/2 mile, with a nice directional arrow."

The fastest, most definitive answer to prayer I have ever experienced.

Now today, in the Gospel, our two travelers are on the way to Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were walking, they were talking about the events of the last few days in Jerusalem. The trial, the crucifixion, the empty tomb, the rumors about the women being told Jesus was alive, but the men having gone to the tomb found nothing. They were disciples of Jesus so they had to be wondering if the executions would continue.

So these travelers, as they made their way to Emmaus, were most likely dusty, to the point of dirty, tired, frustrated, anxious, scared and perhaps, like on the beltway, near the point of a panic attack. And most certainly looking for a sign, an answer, anything!

And they run into this man. And good old Cleopas in answer to the man's inquiry as to what they were talking about decides to be rude—So that's a good indication of our two travelers state of mind.

"Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in the last few days?" Translated, that means, "Duh, what rock have you had your head under?"

Then two things happened.

First, Jesus begins to teach them. Telling them about the scriptures, about Moses, and about the prophets. And as the three walked along together something happened. They

began to understand the scriptures. They began to understand who he was.

So, what this first thing a miracle? No! It was Christian Formation, Christian Education, Sunday School if you please. What a novel idea as a way to know Christ.

Then the second thing happened.

They were interested enough to invite him to dine with them, and he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. And then they recognized him.

Another miracle? No again. What Jesus taught them was a lesson in Sacramental Theology. In this specific instance Holy Communion. The outward and visible sign of the bread and the wine. The inward and spiritual grace of the presence of Christ with us.

The simple matter of coming to the table brings us into communion with Christ and communion with each other. And the more we practice these two things that Jesus taught the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Christian Education and receiving the Holy Sacraments, the more all encounters with reality in life become like sacraments for us. The more we practice those two simple things, Christian Education and receiving the Holy Sacraments, the more our eyes are opened to Christ's presence

The more our eyes are opened to signs from Christ, (It's still a bit of a miracle to me how Christ could have gotten

that big green sign over that highway so quickly) the more we begin to see Christ working in us and in all of those around us.

Now you might think that having experienced such a marvelous thing these two disciples would have wanted to relish in the moment. They may have wanted to go back to that same spot in the road and see if they could see him again. Can you imagine the feeling they had as they looked at each other and said, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

Of course their hearts were burning, they had experience the living Christ.

But look what they did. "That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together." And they shared their stories; "Simon saw him", "We met him on the road and he has become made known to us in the breaking of the bread".

Having experienced the living Christ they had to share it with others because we don't all see, our eyes are not all opened at the same time. Some days all we have is faith.

Were these two experiences along the road to Emmaus unique once in a lifetime events? No. Christian Education and formation is a life long endeavor. The Holy meal, the

**braking of the bread--well that meal is about the be
prepared and offered to all who wish to receive it.**

**The Lord is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. May that be
known to each of us.**