

## St Pius & St Anthony Homily 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Easter Year A1

When I was a kid, my family spent a lot a time resting Sunday afternoons or Saturdays on the bank of the Ohio River east of Owensboro around Maceo, on my grandparents' farm. They had alfalfa fields on the river bottoms backing up to the River. It was like a family campground. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins - any of us might show up there to fish, camp, (even to swim), or just a Sunday outing to go walk the bank looking for awesome driftwood shapes and have a hot dog cookout (after burning some of the bad driftwood to clean up the bank). But to get back there to the site, you had to drive a couple miles of winding gravel road and then cross a farm field on only a dirt path, to the actual river site. So, when we were back at the camp site, you could see a car coming from miles away based on the rocky road dust that created a rooster tail behind the car. So, we always played a game of 'Guess Who' as to who was approaching. One time in particular, it was really exciting, when we kids were teenagers and had asked granddad about going night fishing for catfish. Well, we got bored waiting for lines to pull, and we played around with some fireworks. About a half hour later, we saw some headlights creeping along the main road and then they stopped moving. They backed up, turned & started to drive back slowly through the field until it stopped. We thought, 'Who's out this late?' Until suddenly a spotlight turned on to us, and we heard no the cackling of the camp fire, but the cackling speaker of the car's radio dispatch. It was State Police officer, checking on a call of suspicious gunfire. The firecrackers got us called in. It all worked out fine, but later we got scared thinking about what if unlit firecrackers we threw into the fire (we had thrown whole packs, bricks in) had gone off while he was talking with us? As I always say, thanks be to God, we survived those adventurous years!

But I bring this story up because of the trick of discovering on the road, who is with you or who you run into. These two disciples headed to Emmaus at first don't recognize who suddenly showed up and walked along with them. But before I focus on what they, those disciples, do, I want to emphasize what this story tells us that Jesus does for all/any of us! Isn't He illustrating His Good Shepherd skills here? In Luke 15;4-6, Jesus tells about himself being the good shepherd who having 100 sheep, when one strays, He will leave the others to go for that one, seeking and finding it, and the great joy that results from bringing the sheep home. These two disciples are discouraged, let down and lost feeling,

they leave Jerusalem and wander toward Emmaus, until Jesus intervenes and comes after them, bringing them back. (*He will do that also to Peter and the gang in John chapter 21 when they go back to fishing--of course, not catching anything without Jesus, but that is Jesus bringing them back to the task of mission in His Name through that reaching out of His*). Jesus does that; he comes to us, meets us where we are--maybe we aren't where we are supposed to be? Okay, don't despair, just watch for Jesus coming to us to bring us back? That is reflected in this Emmaus Story. But be assured that by Jesus coming to meet us where we are, He doesn't leave us there – He takes us farther down the road, leading us to where we should be. A lot of us church people often say, "Why don't others believe? Why don't others practice faith? Why don't others go to church?" That 'Why's' answer is too big to get into here, but Jesus shows a way to go about answering it. Go, meet them where they are, **accompany** them a little, and lead them as Jesus does here, a little farther along the road – the Way. Notice that by accompanying them (walking with them) this interaction makes all the difference (lifechanging). These two disciples respond to such treatment, I'd say way better than they would to any 'shaming, intimidating, judging or calling down' of them ever would. After recognizing that it has been Jesus walking with them, notice they high tail it back to the others, bursting at the seams to tell everyone what has happened to them. Jesus meets them where they were, but not leaving them there, He leads them back to where they should be (and so we should to others, too).

But wanting to especially spotlight the good (positive) here. I like to emphasize that even though these two had strayed off the path, notice their behavior and response to Jesus' outreach. Their faith, rooted in their bones motivated them to respond with a Christlike reciprocal response to this unknown man on the road. As He walked along with them, they came to a decision point (*fork in the road literally, because it led to a meal!*). The reading said Jesus acted like He was going on farther into the night, until they responded and said "Stay with us..." (Luke 24:29). That did it. Jesus reveals Himself to them after this welcoming, open hearted, compassionate gesture (concern for a homeless stranger), it was then, that Jesus revealed Himself to them fully 'in the breaking of the bread' prayers (*what we call Mass today*). They remembered and put into practice what their teacher Jesus had instructed them, when He taught in Matthew 25:34-35, 'Come .....inherit the kingdom prepared for you,,,,,**(WHY?)** .....For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger **(on road)** and you

welcomed me....” These two disciples even disillusioned by life and lost a little, they remember their roots – Jesus’ personal instruction and they practice it in their own way, reaching out with feeling toward this stranger, and what happens? Jesus shows up! When we reflect our Savior’s actions, when we embody or share His words, He shows up! That is the tremendous revelation in this Emmaus Story. Jesus is made known, recognized and revealed through the imitation of Him, (repeated with feeling). Our devotion to Him reflected in our lives as we enact His words and works (***pre-eminently, when we do ‘this’-Mass- in memory of Him***). He is made known to us in the Breaking of the Bread. What a gift, that Jesus meets us every week here, along our Way, giving and revealing Himself to us in this Eucharist.