

Homily St Pius St Anthony 3rd Sunday Easter Year A Luke 24:

There was an old classic theater show (maybe Broadway) titled “A funny thing happened on the way to the Forum”. I’d say the gospel we just heard, “A Funny thing happened on the Way to Emmaus?”

Jesus walks up to the disciples and engages them, but at first He is not recognized. I’d call this encounter a “teasing”? Is this encounter a ‘test’ or a ‘tease’ of them? I lean more toward seeing this engagement as a tease, in that as they are continuing walking, Jesus knows, yet holds back, and the disciples act like they know, but obviously are heading in the wrong direction. *(A question for another day would be to explore why they can’t recognize Jesus – it says they were ‘downcast’(v 17)-were they also teary-eyed like Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:13-15) to not be able to focus on His face. Or was there some newness to His face, like happens in some overdone Glamour Shots that makes a person say ‘it looks like them but then it doesn’t either’. Or were they just so self-obsessed that they couldn’t let go of their own image-expectation of Jesus-the way they wanted to see Him – that they couldn’t accept this experience either, YET).*

But somehow, they don’t recognize Him. And I suspect Jesus is internally smiling as He walks along with the disciples. Especially, when they seem to put him down, after he asked, “Can I join in ? What are you guys talking about?” and they dismissingly respond, “Where have you been – don’t you know?” What is it that we often say, “You hadn’t heard? Where have you been - under a rock?” Jesus can say, “Well, yes, 3 days, I’ve been sleeping under a stone!” But He holds back, because that would give Him away!

A further reason, I sense Jesus ‘teasing’ them back to Jerusalem here, is that Jesus is Truth, and the disciples act like they know everything, and Jesus slowly lets them in on it – this is reflected in the destination – Emmaus. The word’s etymology indicates ‘hot springs’- people went there for its therapeutic healing springs. And recall that after Jesus fully reveals Himself to them in the Breaking of the Bread – They’re going to say, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He spoke to us on the Way?” (Lk 24:32) If we recall, when Jesus talked to the woman at the Well in Jn 4, He told her that accepting Him, the Living Water, would create in her, ‘a spring within oneself, welling up to eternal life’. So, He is the real ‘Emmaus’ – Healing LifeGiving Springs Within!

One element that fascinates me about this event is the personally intimate Bible Study that these disciples get from Jesus – the Author of the

Word Himself. It was a 7 mile walk (about 2 ½ hours casual pace) and talk with Jesus about insight into all the scripture! Jesus' reviews the whole Old Testament. Luke 24:27 says 'beginning with Moses and **ALL** the Prophets, Jesus interpreted what referred to Him in **ALL** the scriptures'.

Like He had an outline checklist of Messianic prophecies to clear:

How about 'born of a virgin' of Isaiah 7:14 ---checkmark Matt 1:22-23

How about 'born in Bethlehem' Micah 5:2 ---checkmark Matt 2:5-6

OR if we just looked at the last week's events:

How about Messiah entering City on donkey? Zech 9:9 Got it Mt 21:4

How about Messiah sold out for 30 pcs silver-Zech 11? Got it Mt 27:9-10

How about Messiah's garments gambled over-Ps 22:8? Got it Mt 27:35

How about Messiah' being struck, sheep scatter-Zech 13:7-Got Mt 26:31

Some scholars suggest that there are over 300 OT messianic prophecies fulfilled in Jesus Christ! so we could go on and on, but those disciples had over 2 ½ hours walking time with Jesus to be taught all those connections! For us too, don't our most memorable experiences happen in travels – I am thinking here of those family vacation trips together or college road trips! The greatest experiences with Jesus, certainly happened on the road in the gospel of Luke especially – He is like the New Testament's version of the Greek Poet Homer, who wrote the Odyssey and Iliad-Great Adventure Travel Stories. His gospel (Jesus ministers all over Judea Samaria in missions and Acts of the Apostles continues that theme, as one long journey adventure of the Early Church from Jerusalem to Rome, evangelizing to the ends of the earth - Paul alone having at least 3 missionary journals recorded in Acts!)

This 'movement-journeying' theme is recorded in the very Name of Jesus (The Way Jn 14:6) and the first Christians. It is not until Acts 11:26, that we hear that the Christians got that name 'Christians' tagged on to them – prior to Antioch's mission, they were known as 'people of the Way' -followers of the WAY--Acts 9:2. Acts 19:9 & 23. On the way, on the road – with Jesus (following)!

Not surprisingly so much of Jesus' most touching ministry happens on the road or on trips. Speaking of family vacations, remember that Luke's gospel at the beginning has a great story of Jesus being lost (home alone) in the family journeying to and from Jerusalem Temple (Luke 2:41-52). And most of the greatest miracles of Jesus, happen along the WAY-on road trips- think of the little woman with hemorrhage who intercepts Jesus on His travel way to heal Jairus' daughter- she just wants to drop by and touch his clothing and in

fact gets healed just walking along (Lk 8:42-44). Or the ten lepers whose healing occurred as they were following Jesus' travel directions to go to Temple priests for recognition (Lk 17:11-19) Or the blind beggar at roadside who Jesus healed as he passed by Luke 18:35-43 or even Zacchaeus who parked Himself along the parade journey route of Jesus, before taking up His own journey home to eat with Jesus later (Lk19:1-10). And Luke has Jesus teach his best parables, all about travels, like the Good Samaritan on the road (Lk 10:25-37) or the Prodigal Son journeying away to party and then back home..... (Lk 15:11-32) or the vineyard owner who goes on journey to other country-sends son on trip to collect his harvest rent (Lk 20:9-19)

So, what a trip and adventure following Jesus – on the Way! We are on the Way! And most comforting of all, is that when we might veer off in a wrong direction, He will show up, He will walk up to us, and gently nudge us back on to the right path (our hearts burning for Him-longing for Him too) – like a Good Shepherd seeking out the two stray sheep wandering off to Emmaus – Jesus comes to meet us where we are at, so that He can lead us back home!