

“Who is that Unnamed Fellow Disciple?”

“People of La Porte and all who dwell in Indiana, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. Let everyone know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and God, this Jesus whom you crucified.”
Could the Apostle Peter have spoken these words here today?

The response of those who heard Peter’s words on that first Pentecost Sunday were cut to the heart. In a different fashion, the two Emmaus disciples were also touched in their hearts—“**Did not our hearts burn within us?**” they mused after Jesus walked and talked with them on the road and after He broke bread and then quickly disappeared from their sight.

Perhaps you are troubled in your heart about something. That’s why you have come to worship today, isn’t it? And like all the times you have come, the Holy Scriptures have spoken to you again, touching your heart, calling you with the Gospel, enlightening you with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, sanctifying you and making you holy through the forgiveness of your sins, and granting you life and salvation.

You join those two Emmaus disciples as you walk on this earth, mindful of the events of these past few days. As those two disciples walked on their way home, they are joined by someone who doesn’t seem to know much of what’s been going on. He probably hasn’t read the Herald-Argus or tuned into WLOI radio. He doesn’t check ‘What’s New Jerusalem’ website, nor does he watch the NBC nightly news.

Yet this man knows. He hides His identity from them for a time, and at His good and gracious time He will make Himself known.

The two disciples were heading home after the celebration of the Passover in Jerusalem. Passover was one of those celebrations which all righteous Jews would make pilgrimage and come to Jerusalem during

this time. They knew they were heading home, but after the events of this particular Passover, they hadn't seen which way God was heading. When Jesus approaches them on the road, He joins in their conversation, saying in effect, 'Hi, guys. What's happening here?'

While the men could see with their eyes to make their physical trip home possible, their eyes were temporarily blocked from recognizing Jesus. They were blind, not in a physical sense but in a spiritual sense. They had heard the events which happened to Jesus in His arrest, trial, crucifixion, and death.

We sometimes miss seeing where God has taken us, too, don't we? It's so easy to focus on the negatives in life. We dwell on something critical or unkind which someone said to us years ago in our past. We see TV commercials and think about all the things we don't have. We're surrounded by sinful people—those named and those whose names we do not know—and what we see most is their faults and shortcomings.

We focus on negatives in the Church. We remember more the financial struggles and our declining worship attendance. We become anxious about the fact there are so few people to do the work of such a large undertaking of maintaining the ministry of making disciples. We get unnerved when changes take place or are even proposed. We've lost our vision when sin leads us to conflict with other people.

We dwell on the negatives because we forget God's purpose for us, that is, when we no longer can see His way in our lives. Our self-image is threatened by things others say because we're insecure about our purpose or value in God's plan. We are preoccupied with the things of this world and lose sight of what truly matters. We're focused on the faults—ours and of others—as well as our weaknesses when we're called to be witnesses for our Lord. We get stuck on the negatives here at Church because we treat it like a business and forget that the gates of hell will not overcome it.

When we fall into that kind of thinking, and things don't always work out according to our plans, we may think God is going the wrong way, or that He has lost His way. But God certainly hasn't lost His way.

God has always been going the right way—His way. Jesus showed these two disciples God's way by explaining to them the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus showed them that the whole Bible points to or from His death and resurrection, that His suffering and death were God's way of salvation for us. This was not a defeat, but it was all part of His ascension to glory.

Jesus' death was God's way—His only way—to cleanse us from our sin. Because Christ suffered, our sins are forgiven. God now clears the path—the way—for eternal life. While it may have seemed like a setback, this was His way of saving us. Whether we realized it or not, God has been guiding our way, too. God's people have their ups and downs, but never really setbacks. The real ups are not emotional highs, but are really days of trust even amid sin and tragedy.

The downs are never seen as God losing His way, but rather God's way of strengthening us. With these ups and downs, we realize that the negatives in life are just sidetracks for us as we travel on the road—the road to heaven.

That's where God has been taking us. So we let God show us His way for our future. Christ got the disciples turned in the right way. He sat down with them, broke bread, and in doing this, their eyes were opened and they then recognized Jesus. He would quickly vanish from their sight as He had other people to encourage on the Way.

But Cleopas and the unnamed disciple would sit there, stunned, trying to make sense of it all. **“Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures?”** The news of seeing the risen Christ overwhelmed them, and they got up that very hour, traveled the 7 miles back to Jerusalem, found the other disciples, and shared their news. They no longer walked in sorrow and

sadness; they probably made haste like the shepherds to tell this good news to others.

While we hear Cleopas doing most of the speaking, you can imagine that the other unnamed disciples also chimed in when Jesus first approached them. By their visit's end, we don't know which one said what, but does it matter? Both disciples' eyes were shrouded with sorrow. Both spoke of sadness in their hearts. Like Simeon, they were waiting for the consolation of Israel, hoping that Jesus was the Messiah promised.

It wasn't until Jesus would open their eyes to the writings of Moses and the Prophets and enlighten them with the gift of understanding and wisdom. That is how these two disciples could read, mark, learn, and inwardly take to heart the teachings of God's way of salvation. So can you!

Where are you in this story? Like last week's Gospel and the story of Thomas, you were the Twin of Thomas, thankful that your twin was there that second Easter evening to receive that blessing, **"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."**

Today, in this reading, you are that unnamed disciple. You first walked in sadness without the news of the resurrection, but once Jesus walked with you and sat with you and explained the Writings of the Gospel, your heart burned within you. That news of God's grace announced the forgiveness of your sins and granted you life and salvation. Cut to the heart by the knowledge of God's Law and His righteous judgment of your sins, you ask, **"What shall I do?"**

Peter again answers, **"Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."**

On that Pentecost Sunday, the Holy Spirit would send His fire to warm all hearts to the Gospel. The Holy Spirit continues to call, gather, enlighten, and sanctify the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it

united with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. He continues to warm our hearts as the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and sanctifies us as we live according to that Word.

We live to confess Jesus is Lord and by calling on that name of the Lord we are saved. Our lives are spared the burning in hell, where not only the heart would be burned, but all our being would be destroyed. We gather to know where Jesus will never leave us for He is always found in His imperishable, living, and abiding Word and the holy and precious Sacraments.

Then we go the highways and byways of life, finding other unnamed people who are saddened in this world and who do not know of Jesus' life and resurrection. We bid them to abide with us, to learn of Jesus, to sit at His table, to see His crucified stained hands as He breaks bread with them, and as He bids them to know His love and to cause their hearts to burn within them.

We pray: Lord Jesus Christ, stay with us. Heal our eyes that we may see You. Grant us Your Holy Spirit to warm our hearts by Your Holy Word. Set our feet to walk in Your commands, refresh us by walking with us on the way to eternal life, help us remember our baptism, and prepare for us Your table in the presence of our enemies. Help us to walk with others who are saddened by life's trials and lead them to know Your abiding presence. In Your name we pray. Amen.