

The Road To Emmaus



Whew! Lent's over! Finally! Hold on a minute. There's still more to come: Easter Season – aka Eastertide or Paschal Time. It lasts 50 days, and includes the solemnities of the Lord: Divine Mercy Sunday, the Ascension of the Lord, and Pentecost. And let us also not forget that we have several chapters of post-Resurrection scripture readings to ponder.

In last month's reflection, I mentioned that there are two parts to changing a habit. The first part is the 21 days of abstinence from the old behavior – for example beer, chocolate, or cursing. Abstinence from them for can be likened to the physical withdrawal phase of Recovery. And, as anyone who has ever given up a habit will tell you, the hard part is the second phase – not returning to the old ways. Ever.

One of my favorite post-resurrection stories can serve as a model for developing a new spiritual habit. Imagine for a moment, that you and your best buddy are walking along the beach, talking about what you and your families did this last Holy Week, and what you are planning to do now that the Holy Days are over. All of a sudden, a stranger comes up from behind

and invites himself into your conversation ... That's right. It's The Road To Emmaus 2018.

Let's forget for a moment that the Emmaus story happened long ago in a faraway place, and take a literary leap to place the road to Emmaus along our coastline. Scholars aren't sure where the biblical Emmaus was located in the first place, so let's just put it a few stadia West of St. James.

The first thing to strike us is that we have no clue who this stranger is. Cleopas and the other unnamed disciple had a similar memory loss. They forgot all that He did in the three years they were with Him, as well as all He told them the week before. They just could not reconcile their history with what they saw on Friday, and then heard on Sunday. They doubted their faith and belief in Jesus, and reverted to their previous conceptions. In the words of recovery, they had a spiritual relapse.

Back to the beach, and next we become intrigued by how much the stranger knows about scriptures. Who is this guy? Our friends on the Road to Emmaus got a crash course in New Testament catechism. Do we understand what Luke is telling us about the Suffering Savior? He certainly wasn't what the first century Christians had come to believe would be coming. What did we expect would be revealed to us last Sunday? Who is this Jesus 2018?

Upon reaching Emmaus, they asked the stranger to join them for dinner. Jesus revealed himself through the breaking of the bread, and their faith and belief were restored. There are two takeaways for us this evening:

The first is that Jesus revealed Himself to them personally, and Jesus 2108 will do that to each and every one of us if and when we open our eyes. The second is that He revealed Himself through the breaking of the bread. One of the His greatest gifts is the Eucharist ... our daily bread, our spiritual food.

To return to our own habit change, it takes 21 consecutive days to quit an old behavior and replace it with a new one. For many habits, there is an additional 6-8 week recovery phase needed to solidify a new behavior. Easter Tide lasts 7 weeks. In your morning prayers, ask Jesus help to quit the old and add the new for just today. How about making Eucharist once more each week as your new behavior? Try it for the next 7 weeks. And see Him in your life.

Can I get an Amen?

Now, where's the chocolate!