

Third Sunday of Easter: Confused Sunday

Last Sunday's Gospel was the Gospel of Doubting Thomas. This Sunday's Gospel is the Gospel of the Confused Disciples.

It was Easter Sunday evening. Two disciples were walking to Emmaus, a village seven miles from Jerusalem. Their discussion went something like this: How could it be that our master, Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in word and deed, could be put to death last Friday? He really seemed to be the long sought Messiah, the Christ. But He is dead. Now we hear about some women who claim that He has risen from the dead. They told His closest followers; so they went to the tomb. They found the tomb empty, neither Jesus nor His body. We don't know what to make of this." They talked. They questioned. They remained confused.

Then Jesus started to walk with them. He explained the Scriptures, the Word of God, how the Messiah would first suffer and then enter into His Glory. He ate with them. During the meal He recreated the Last Supper. He took bread, blessed it and gave it to them. And they recognized Him in the Breaking of the Bread, the first Christian name for the Eucharist.

So often, we walk along the road of our lives confused. We have difficulty solving our problems. We doubt our own ability to come up with the answers we need. Some people tell us to look into ourselves for the answers, as though we had a secret chamber someplace within us, or as early heretics would call it, a hidden gnosis, where all the answers to our questions can be found. This early heresy of the Church still continues in those who think they have all the answers within themselves. It is true that through baptism God dwells within us. It is also true that we need the gifts He gives us to find direction in our lives and, eventually, to help us understand His Life and His Kingdom. We need the gifts of Word and Sacrament.

Sometimes we act as though we have all the answers to life. We do not. In fact, we don't even know the correct questions to ask. So many people spend their lives seeking the answers to the wrong questions. For example, most people try to answer these questions: How can I become prosperous? How can I become rich? Their whole lives are spent chasing the illusion that happiness can be bought. If they are among the few who do become rich, what do they have to show for their lives? A bank account? A lot of stuff? Does that make a life successful? There is a reason why they do not put a luggage rack on a hearse.

Another question that so many people spend their lives trying to answer is: How can I become better than everyone else? Again this is not a question that our lives should revolve around. We want to be the best person we can be, and that is very good, but when we start comparing ourselves to other people we can easily become arrogant and proud. "Look at that tax collector," said the Pharisee in the Temple. "You know, Lord, that I am a lot better than him. I do lots of good things. Let me remind you in case your forgot." But the tax collector merely beat his breast and said, "Have

mercy on me a sinner." Only he left justified. When we devote our lives to answering the question "How can I be better than others?" whether it is better than others before God, a better parent than my neighbors, a better teacher than the guy or girl in the next classroom, a better priest than another man, etc, we are simply asking the wrong question, one that leads to arrogance. The question we need to ask is, How can I be a better person than I am?

We think we have all the answers. We do not even know the right questions. Another questions we should be asking ourselves is one that we are secretly afraid to ask: How can I be different than what modern society claims is the norm? The norm of society tells Teens that drinking, taking drugs and doing things that belong in a marriage is all part of high school and college. The norm of society tells adults that cheating on their jobs, and in their marriages is part of life. The norm of society tells people not to get carried away and sacrifice too much of themselves to help others. It is difficult to ask, "How can I be different?" because none of us want to be different from everyone else. We want to fit in. We want to be part of the boys, part of the girls. We don't want people mocking us. It is a difficult question to ask "How can I be different?" and, yet, that is what holiness is. To be holy is to be different, set apart for the Lord.

There are many other questions we all need to ask ourselves, questions about how to be a good husband, wife, father, mother, Teen, child, priest, deacon, etc. We are not given the answers to our questions today, on Confused Sunday. But we are told where the answers can be found. Jesus led the disciples on the road to Emmaus to the Truth through Sacred Scripture. The Bible is not just the Good Book. It is the living and effective Word of God. We go to Scripture to seek the answers to our problems. We need to meditate on Scripture and let the Word of God work on us.

Peace can be found in the middle of confusion when we are open to the second great gift presented in today's Gospel, the Eucharist. Those disciples finally recognized Jesus in the Breaking of the Bread. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts on fire?" We may not have the answers to the profound questions of life, or even to the daily concerns of life, but we do know where peace is found. St. Paul put it so beautifully in the conclusion of the Letter to the to the Philippians, "The peace of Christ that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." That's *Philippians 4:7*. We cannot understand our world or even our lives, but as long as we have the Peace of Christ, our hearts and our minds will be guarded from all that can destroy our happiness. In Him alone we find our joy. We cannot understand His Peace. But we can enjoy it. Those disciples who had this marvelous encounter with Christ ran back to Jerusalem, to Peter and the boys, and told them what they experienced. They had not become profound theologians. But they had become committed Christians. That was their joy, the gifts of Word and Eucharist.

We will never discover the answers we need to life. We will always be confused about what happened to us in the past, what we should do in the present, what the future holds. Some may ask: Why is it that I did everything I could possibly do as a

parent, or as a husband or wife, and life turned out rather messy? Others may ask: Why is it that I followed everything my parents asked, worked hard in school, and I am still not good enough for them? All ask: Why is it that other people break the rules and have it all?" We cannot answer all the question of life. Still, we can be at peace, even in the face of unresolved issues. We can be at peace because we have our anchor, Sacred Scripture, and our joy, the Eucharist. We may not know why things have happened, or even what things have happened. We may not know the best course for us to take in this or that situation, but we do know this: If we stay united to the Lord in Word and Sacrament, we will never go wrong.

We need to trust God and let that Peace which is beyond our understanding guide our lives. Then we will no longer be confused.