

Second Sunday Easter

Thomas' Confession

At his final meal with his disciples in John's Gospel which we read today, *Jesus had promised not to leave them orphans*. His appearances to them after his Resurrection were part of his fulfilment of this pledge. When he showed himself to them locked behind closed doors in Jerusalem, he made real the *joy* and the *peace* which he had spoken of at the supper. He also prepared them for the future.

There are two beatitudes in John's gospel: one is concerned with *mutual service in the foot-washing* and the other with *belief which does not depend on sight*. It is easy for us to identify with Thomas. Even though he was the pessimist among the disciples, he regarded an invitation to go to Jerusalem with Jesus as an invitation to death. When Jesus called himself the Way, he said bluntly, "How do we know the way?" Jesus was the good shepherd of Thomas. He knew him as one of his own and enabled him to make a confession of Jesus surpassing all others in the gospel, "My Lord and my God."

For those who were Baptized and/or Confirmed at the Easter Vigil, we could witness their joy and peace at the celebration. Our hope is that their joy and peace grow over the years. If they should ask us, the parishioners, what our experience at our baptism was, like, we might not be able to tell them since many of us were baptized as babies.

But if they ask us, "Have we ever experienced the *joy* and *peace* that Jesus promised in our lifetime" (especially as adults), how would you or I respond? At what point has our faith given us joy and peace? I can only respond for myself.

As I reflect over the years two things helped prepare me for that experience of *joy and peace*, and both were in my faith community. The first was that I was now willing to change my life around and order it towards the Lord. Like many people, I was not satisfied with the life I was living and realized at a deeper level that there would never be lasting joy and peace until *I changed*, and the second was that I needed to commit myself to begin again a path would bring me closer to God. Only in a Faith Community could that happen since I realized that I could not go it alone. *Choice and Commitment.*

We may not ever get the chance that the apostles had of *actually living and walking with the Lord*, but that doesn't mean the Lord will never journey with us along our road to Emmaus. Even though it may not be physical, it can certainly be spiritual.

On our part, our relationship with the Lord need to be more than just attending the Eucharist each Sunday. Imagine trying to sustain a relationship with someone who is the most important person in our life by getting together once a week. The deeper the relationship requires a deeper commitment. The sacraments of the Church are the scaffolding to begin that relationship with the Lord, both personally and as community, but our personal prayer life adds the rest.

Our faith community is essential not only for their spiritual witness of a commitment with the Lord, but also for their prayers and examples and support that help each other along *the Way*. Even though we desire a personal relationship with the Lord, and we may have that, the Lord *desires* that we have a personal relationship with one another *in Christ Jesus*.

Jesus founded a Church, not just personal relationships with him where everyone goes their separate ways. Jesus' personal relationship with his Beloved Disciple was restricted while he was still on earth in his earthly body. Now, in his resurrected body, there are no more restrictions. We all have become Jesus' beloved disciples first through Baptism and deepened through our own personal choice and commitment! A "Jesus and Me" relationship sounds like an oxymoron in a spiritual sense.

Anyone who makes that choice and commitment to the Lord becomes *Spiritually Magnetized*, attracting others not only to themselves but to others in their Faith Community. It is our personal relationship with the Lord that we bring *to* the community so that we become a corporate witness to the Lord. As Father Chaminade would say, we become the man or woman who never dies, but passes on our spiritual life to others, but passes on our Marianist Charism to other who will someday replace us.

Our Faith Community isn't an elite club for those who are saved, for those who have made it, but for all those who continued to journey with the Lord: always loved, already saved, and trying to live the joy and peace that the Lord offers all who make their personal Choice and Commitment to Him in His Community, in his *Assembly*, in his *Church*.