

## FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



‘And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us when he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?’ (Lk. 24: 30-32)

The disciples did not recognize the Risen Christ on the road to Emmaus. They walked with him for seven whole miles, from Jerusalem to Emmaus, but failed to realize who he was. How is that possible?

They only recognize him at the breaking of the bread. The breaking of the bread is a clearer manifestation of his presence to them than they’re actually conversing with him in the flesh. Can you believe that?

The same will happen for us here at Mass this weekend. Jesus Christ walks with us along the journey of life, and converses with us every day, but most of the time we, like the disciples of Emmaus, can fail to recognize him. The celebration of the Mass, of the Eucharist, is the place where we can truly encounter him.

Jesus ‘took the bread.’ The verb ‘to take’ is significant in the Gospel. The bread was not ‘given’ to him, or ‘shared’ with him! He ‘took’ it. Just as, at the Last Supper, he ‘took’ the cup. The bread which he takes is that of the Paschal Seder, called the ‘Afikoman.’ This unleavened bread is broken by the head of the household at the beginning of the Seder, and one half of it is wrapped in a white napkin and hidden, buried. This hidden bread will then be brought back (to life) at the end of the meal, and consumed. The Afikoman represents the Paschal Lamb, the lamb which was slaughtered by each family in Egypt, and whose blood was placed on the door posts of their house, making the Angel of Death ‘Passover’ them, saving them from destruction.

For us, this bread is no longer a representation of the Paschal lamb, it is Christ himself. “He took the bread, broke it, gave it to his disciples saying, “Take this all of you and eat it, this is my body which will be given up for you.” Jesus takes upon himself the sins of the world. Jesus is the lamb who was slaughtered, buried, and then brought back to life on the third day. When we eat this bread, we partake of the death of Jesus, so that his Resurrection may also be experienced by us.

The disciples on the road to Emmaus experienced this Paschal Mystery, the presence of Christ. We too will experience it in our liturgy today.

Happy Easter, Fr. Sean