

Emmaus

Why didn't the two disciples recognize Jesus when he sidled up beside them on their hike back to Emmaus? It's not like they did not know what he looked like. The two had devoted their lives to following him. How could they not recognize him when they saw him?

It's not really so surprising. Its not like they were looking for him. They were hardly expecting to see him. They might even have wondered at how much this guy reminded them of Jesus. But Jesus was dead and buried. I don't even recognize my students sometimes outside the familiar context of the classroom. I am pretty sure I would not have recognized Jesus either.

What *did* open their eyes was when they broke bread together that evening. Having walked all day long together, the two invited Jesus to stay with them overnight. Last week I heard a brother Jesuit make a comment about these two disciples on the road to Emmaus that put this story in a whole new context for me. He wondered whether the two were not a couple. A couple! That changed the scene completely for me. A couple who had together chosen to drop everything and follow Jesus! Now walking home, heads down, despondent and grief stricken. "We were hoping that He would be the one to redeem Israel." They also shared that they were confused and disoriented, "Now some women from our group have astounded us. They were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body. They came back and reported that they had seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive!"

I am sure that was the final straw for these two. Its bad enough that their leader had been executed. But now denial and wishful thinking was running through the group spreading shaking everyone up. The wheels were coming off the wagon. It was time to go home and get back to their lives.

What turns them around again, from home back to Jerusalem, begins with a random act of kindness towards the stranger they had befriended along the way. The two invited their newfound companion to stay with them for the night. Because I do like to also imagine that they felt free to do this because Emmaus was their home, from which they had set off on their journey with Jesus in the first place.

The couple finally recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread. Now up to now, our situation has been similar to theirs. They had been debriefing over the weekend, sharing their

faith and despair, their hopes and fears, their dreams and disillusionment together with their new found companion. Their hearts had burned within them as Jesus opened the Scriptures for them. But it was not until the breaking of the bread that they recognized Jesus. Here is where they leave us. We can Zoom chat together. We can post our hopes and fears on social media; we can text our dreams and despair on our phones. We can see one another, but we cannot break bread together. We cannot share the Eucharist together. We cannot eat bread and drink wine divinized into the body and blood of Christ. That we cannot do.

And so since we cannot take communion, we are left to commune together spiritually online. or to beat the drum I have been beating every week during this lockdown, since we cannot eat the Body of Christ we are going to have to become the Body of Christ, ourselves, as best we can, however we are able. We cannot run to Jerusalem to meet together. But we can be in touch with each other, we can be spiritually one while remaining physical apart.

May Christ give us the grace to be channels of his grace online, playing video games together, taking selfies to post to each other, making videos to entertain one another. Even without being able to meet, may we stay in touch and become blessings to each other. And may we thereby exorcize the worst of this coronavirus curse, and arise anew to an even more blessed life than ever.