

In today's gospel lesson we learn everything that we need for salvation. This is pretty ironic because we learn about salvation from two of Jesus' disciples whose response to his resurrection was to return home as fast as they could get there. And on this two-hour walk these disciples were venting about all that had transpired in Jerusalem that week and on that very day, when the women in their group had returned from Jesus' tomb bearing unbelievable tales of a missing body and of meeting angels. The women had **glimpsed the holy**, and their response was to tell others.

However, these two disciples were fleeing the resurrected Jesus, returning home to Emmaus. I don't know about you, but I have been on this road to Emmaus. I wish that I could tell you that I have never headed away from the risen Jesus, but I have. The last time wasn't all that long ago, either. It was November of 2008, the Sunday of Veteran's Day weekend. On Friday I had been interviewed by the Diocese of Virginia's Committee on the Priesthood—the COPs, we call them—about the possibility of being a postulant for Holy Orders right here in Virginia. By all the rules and policies of this diocese the COPs were supposed to tell me “no.” But “no” was not the vibe that I was getting. I was sure that the answer would be some kind of miracle. One of the COPs promised that he would call me that very night and let me know what the group would recommend to our bishop. I didn't get a call on Friday night. I didn't get a call on Saturday. By the time came for church on Sunday morning I was a “basket case.” I'd been so sure; I'd been so wrong!

I went to church anyway, but I was plenty sad. I was plenty disappointed. Angry? Heck, yes! I'm not much of a crying person, but I teetered on the verge of tears that day. I was scheduled to be a chaliceist at the 9 AM service. I thought about not going. Somehow I went. But it was for the wrong reason, pride, I think. I'll never forget what happened that day, though. About a million people, it seemed, asked me what I had heard from the COPs. And to each I responded, “Alleluia! The Lord is risen, indeed.” But I am sure it was easy to tell that there was no Alleluia in my heart that day. And this was not the season of Easter, either.

Then the most extraordinary things happened. In our culture we don't touch each other much. But there was a lot of touching that day: hands on the shoulder, arm, a pat, a squeeze. This was

pretty amazing, because—remember—I was on the alter. Physical presence. No words. When it came time for Communion somehow I had the bread and my rector the wine. And suddenly all of the hurt, the pain, the bewilderment, and the anger were washed away, replaced, replenished with love. I could tangibly feel the love of Jesus, the love that had been there all along. The love poured out **to** all who came in search of Jesus, poured out **from** all who came in search of Jesus; it made a big continuous, infinite circle right around and through the altar. Right there, in the bread and wine, right there, in everyone at the communion rail, I recognized Jesus. I knew that it would be all right—come what may, it would be all right. And, as I discovered on Tuesday, the person who was supposed to have called me simply forgot.

I wonder; have you ever been on this road to Emmaus, heading away from the resurrected Jesus? In today's gospel lesson Jesus joined the two disciples who were heading home to Emmaus and asked them what was troubling them. Amazingly the two didn't recognize Jesus; we can't explain this scientifically, and neither could Luke, who says only that "their eyes were kept from recognizing him." In fact, none of the hundreds of disciples to whom Jesus appeared in his dozen or so post-resurrection appearances recognized him. We could speculate about why, but we won't—at least not today. What is important to note here is that catching **a glimpse of the holy** often involves a breaking open of our expectations. We don't always see the holy where we expect to see the holy.

This is what happened on the road to Emmaus. The incognito Jesus, this Jesus who went initially unrecognized, joined the two disciples and began to explain the scriptures to them in a new way—in the very way that Luke will later use to reinterpret the Jewish scriptures to explain Jesus as the Messiah. Here we see the first way that Jesus broke open their understanding of reality, allowing them to catch **a glimpse of the holy**. He took the scriptures, upon which their world-view was based, and interpreted them in a new way—in the way that is very familiar to us today—in a way which made Jesus' death and Resurrection seem utterly necessary rather than a ludicrous impossibility.

There was a view even in Jesus' day, just at there is now, that Jesus' disciples "made the resurrection up," just made up the story of Jesus' Resurrection, and then sat around rearranging Jewish scriptures to support their fiction. Luke says "No!" to this belief and manages to call us "foolish" and "slow of heart" in the process. Luke shows us that Jesus himself was the author of this new interpretation of scripture, this breaking open of scripture. In doing so Jesus gives us all a **glimpse of the holy**.

Notice what Jesus did next, though. When the two disciples arrived in Emmaus he walked ahead "as if he were going on." Jesus had followed them all the way from his resurrection just to break open their closed minds and hearts to the reality of his continued existence, and then he was seemingly prepared to walk away. It wasn't until they invited Jesus to stay with them, urged Jesus to stay with them, that Jesus entered their lives in a whole new way. We, too, have this choice. We can accept Jesus into our lives, or let him continue to walk with us unrecognized, seemingly going our own way, dead to the reality of Jesus' presence with us.

Because these disciples invited Jesus in, though, we know what else it takes to break us open to Jesus' presence with us, to break us open to the holy. You see, it was when they were at table, and when Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them that they recognized him for the Messiah that he truly is. Then Jesus vanished from sight.

Or did he? In a few minutes we, too, will break bread with Jesus, a Jesus who has followed us all the way from his resurrection, a Jesus whom our eyes will not see present among us, but who is present none-the-less. In a few minutes we, too, will take bread, bless it, break it, and give it to each other in recognition that Jesus is somehow present in our meal, that Jesus is present and at work in and through each of us. Taking, blessing, breaking, and giving are the very four actions around which our whole liturgy is shaped. Taking, blessing, breaking, and giving are the very four actions around which our whole lives should be shaped. We take the lives that God has given us—whatever these lives bring—we bless and thank God for those lives, we break open our perceptions to

glimpse the holy—to glimpse God—and then we give away the glimpse of God that we have been given by sharing God with others.

In our liturgy every Sunday we catch far more than a mere **glimpse of the holy**, we will catch the whole glorious vision, the whole reality of God at work in our world and in our lives. We will share this vision and align ourselves to God’s purpose, becoming more and more the agents of God in his work in our world. Then we, too, will be able to offer **a glimpse of the holy** for all whom we meet. Our liturgy offers a transformative vision, one that moves our understanding of “the holy” from “something reserved, something set apart from ordinary or everyday use,” to “someone participating in the work of God in the world.” The holy is not something to be merely glimpsed and shut away for our own use. Instead, the holy is all about doing God’s work in the world, pointing ever to God rather than to ourselves.

Take a look at what these disciples did after their eyes were open. They had a kind of retroactive “aha” moment, exclaiming “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” They had had this experience but had not understood what the experience meant. So let’s take a moment to look back on exactly what Jesus had done on the road to Emmaus.

Jesus had followed these two disciples even when they were walking away from him and his Resurrection. Jesus had been with them even when they did not recognize him. Jesus had met them in their weakness, in their pain, in their suffering. He had met them in their hunger for salvation, misguided as it was. He had walked with them, rearranging their perceptions of reality and finally breaking open their hearts to the reality of the utterly impossible: God with us, God incarnate, God raised to new life so that we might have such a life also—not only in our future, but in our present. Yes, the utterly impossible is in progress. “Christ has come. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.”

We, too, can catch **a glimpse of the holy** and allow it to alter our whole existence. We can participate in the holy in the small things that we do for others, without need for recognition. We

can participate in the holy in our growth in knowledge and love of God, and in our increase in love for all whom God has made. We can participate in the holy in our acceptance and faith despite our adversity. We can participate in the holy in our doing of justice and in our love of kindness. We can participate in the holy through our tears. We can participate in the holy by telling others that Jesus is risen.

In the end these two transformed disciples got up “that same hour” and returned to Jerusalem to tell others about what they had experienced. Having caught a glimpse of the holy, can we keep the Good News of Jesus’ Resurrection for ourselves?

Alleluia! Christ is risen.