

Go forth and Mission
Third Sunday of Easter
Fr. Mike Galbraith

The Gospel for today has a simple liturgical flavor to it. The famous two disciples who had been traumatized by the death of Jesus and so were returning to the safety of Emmaus here are pictured as relating the experience of being spun around by their meeting with Jesus, who had broken bread with them. Their hearts were on fire during this intimate liturgy and so back they come to relate their homiletic story. During this relating, Jesus shows up unexpectedly, convincing His congregation that He is really present to them in His humanity and divinity. Jesus then does the historical review, proving from the Holy Writings that He would have to suffer. Then, as results with any good homily, the minds of the little congregation were opened with understanding.

This is all very intimate and comforting of course. Intimacy, however, has consequences and Jesus ends the liturgy with a definite Dismissal Rite. "Get out of here and preach repentance and the forgivingness of God, beginning right here, right outside that door."

I hear many Catholics, when asked, define themselves as Catholics by the confident statement, "Yes, I go to Mass". That hurts my ears because it is like a fundamental protestant saying; "Oh yes, I am saved," but does nothing more. That is similar to one of the listeners in today's Gospel saying that he was there when Jesus ate the bread, so that makes him a disciple, a follower and that's all. I would love hearing someone define themselves as a Catholic by saying, "Yes, I get sent personally and communally by the missioning experience of the reception of the Word and Eucharist." I know that's a long form of self-definition, but you get the picture.

Every encounter that Jesus had with people after the Resurrection was a "mission-meeting". Jesus did not tell His little show-and-tell congregation to relax, talk things over and then see what's going to turn up next. As with any experience of intimacy, with God or with other humans, there will be implications. Intimacy invites us into mystery, into adventure, into deeper experiences of life. Jesus invites His intimate friends to go out and be intimate within all nations.

If I were allowed to reform the Eucharistic Liturgy it would be to explain and extend the ending of the "service" by having everyone who has "come to church" announce aloud where and to whom the Eucharistic Community is sending me. It would be a Second Prayer of the Faithful. The faithful are faithful to their being met and by their naming of their being sent. Nobody would be sneaking out of the "service" privately right after Communion. They would have their minds open to understand more clearly why they did come to Mass and why they would want to leave together. The liturgy may end with the Dismissal Rite, but the Mass continues in our living and being sent out to "Mission" to others.

Fr. Mike