

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

In the Easter Season we continue to reflect on the accounts of the appearances of the Risen Jesus to the disciples. All four Gospels include the story of the women going to the tomb at dawn on the first day of the week. They discover the empty tomb and encounter angels who tell them that Jesus is risen.

As we heard on Easter Sunday, Matthew's Gospel then has Jesus appearing to the women and they are given a message for the disciples. The disciples are told to go to Galilee where they will encounter Jesus (Mt 28:1-10).

Last Sunday, we turned to John's Gospel and heard about two appearances of Jesus to the disciples as they gathered in Jerusalem (Jn 20:19-31). Luke also included an account of the appearance of Jesus to the disciples in Jerusalem but before that he presents the story of the appearance of the Risen Jesus to two disciples who were leaving Jerusalem.

That story is only found in Luke's Gospel, and it serves as a bridge between the women at the tomb and the later appearance of Jesus to the Eleven.

"The Journey" is an important motif for Luke. A central theme of his Gospel is the journey of Jesus and the disciples to Jerusalem. His second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, is about the journey of the disciples from Jerusalem to the world.

In that broader context, the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is a message for Luke's community about how they meet the risen Lord.

The early Christian communities gathered each week on the first day of the week (Sunday) to celebrate the Eucharist. For Luke, the "Breaking of the Bread" is the name he used for that celebration of the Eucharist (Acts 2:42, 46, 20:7 and 24:35).

We also know that the communities adapted the Jewish Synagogue Service that was based on a reading from the books of the Torah (attributed to Moses) and a reading from the prophets. In his gospel Luke presented Jesus at the beginning of his mission going into the synagogue at Nazareth and reading from the prophet Isaiah (Lk 4:16-22).

As the two disciples walked away from Jerusalem, they struggled to understand what had happened. As Jesus walks with them he explained to them the things about himself in the Scriptures, beginning with Moses and then all the prophets. We are also told that they recognized Jesus is the "breaking of the bread".

The message for Luke's community was that they will encounter the risen Lord when they gather to listen to the Scriptures and share in the Eucharist.

We are also on a journey and we too at times struggle to understand what is happening around us. We gather each Sunday to listen to the Word of God and to share in the Eucharist so that we too can encounter the Risen Jesus.

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