

040608 Third Sunday of Easter
Road to Emmaus & The Eucharist

I wonder if we have any married couples of mixed faith here today? I ask because I am going to talk about differences between Catholic faith belief and practice versus our brothers and sisters of other Christian faiths – but I want to assure anyone here today this is meant as a teaching about what we believe in – and not any words about or against those of other faith journeys.

Back in Colorado – our parish secretary was a Methodist and her husband a Catholic. Yes – the parish secretary was a Methodist. Every weekend they supported each other's faith. On Saturday evenings, Shirley and Vernon would come to the 4:30 Mass. And on Sundays, Vern would accompany his wife to the 10AM Methodist service. Most all of us close to the Church knew of this – it just wasn't an issue. This dual worship went on for quite a while until Shirley got the idea that as an assistant to the pastor, she should know more about the Catholic faith – after all she worked in the church office.

So Shirley started taking RCIA classes. Shirley is a Kansas Jayhawk and she made it absolutely clear she had no intention of becoming a Catholic. You can guess what happened. Now they only attend one church. While many Protestants never join the Catholic Church, I have seen this dual support in other mixed faith couples.

One time, I was talking with the Baptist wife of a Catholic man. She described herself as a Deep Fried Southern Baptist – those were her words. She came to Mass most every weekend and I asked her what she thought of the Catholic Church compared to the Texas Baptist Church that she had been raised in.

Surprisingly – she said ‘Oh – they’re pretty much the same.’ Astounded at that, I said to her, “Suzanne, how can you mean that they are the same?” And she answered, “Well – in the Baptist Church – they have an opening hymn and an entrance procession into Church.... just like here in the Catholic Church. Then the preacher says some prayers, just like the priest does. And then there is some Scripture reading... there’s preaching... well, maybe lots more preaching in the Baptist Church... then there’s the Lord’s Prayer... and we pray for those who are sick or others needing prayer.”

Well – you can see that from her point of view – that Catholics and Baptists are pretty much the same. How about you? With no disrespect intended, is this the way anyone here feels about Catholic worship versus the services of Baptists or Methodists or other Christian faiths? If your answer is ‘YES’ – then I suggest you call our Director of Religious Education – because you are not aware of the 2,000 year history... you are not seeing or under-standing the signs that make us different.

First and foremost – how was Jesus recognized by two disciples on the road to Emmaus? By the breaking of the bread, right?

So, when you come to a church to worship – if the central part of the services is the consecration of bread and wine – changing it from what it was into the real Body and Blood of Christ – and if it is being done by a successor to the apostles through the laying on of hands of a bishop, that is what they were doing in the earliest hours of the Christian faith... just years after the death of Christ. In those times, the Christians might have gone to Jewish Temples to break open the Scriptures --- and then go to people’s homes for the Breaking of the Bread. But let no one tell you that this was simply a potluck after worship. It never was anything like that. It was a sacred event.

In Holy Father John Paul the Second's beautiful document called *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* – which mean The Eucharist in the Church – he wrote these words: *“The Eucharist, as Christ's saving presence in the community of the faithful and its spiritual food, is the most precious possession which the Church can have in her journey through history. This explains the lively concern which she has always shown for the Eucharistic mystery, a concern which finds authoritative expression in the work of the Councils and the Popes.”*

And since Vatican II, the Eucharist has been referred to as the Source and Summit of our worship and prayer. Those words (Source and Summit) mean there is nothing more important than this holy meal at which the Lord Jesus comes and in a sense, re-offers Himself to the Father on our behalf. He humbly gives us himself as food – spiritual and real food for our journey towards eternity with Him.

Let me continue on this example of married couples of different faiths – and continue with the idea of supporting each other by going to the Catholic Church and the Protestant faith. John Paul II in this document on the Eucharist said that ‘Catholics, while respecting the religious convictions of our other separated brothers and sisters must refrain from receiving the communion served in their celebrations. I must tell you that I didn't know about this – and about a year before I started deacon training in Denver, my wife and I were invited to a wedding at an Anglican Catholic Church. I had even heard that this church had petitioned to become united with Rome. So I figured that – hey, they have a priest, he's dressed in the same sort of vestments... so at Communion time I received their Eucharist. I now know that this is a serious mistake.

Again, John Paul II said 'This not receiving the communion of other faiths is done so that we Catholics do not condone an ambiguity about the nature of the Eucharist and by this action bear false witness to the Truth of the Eucharist.' Similarly, he wrote, 'it would be unmentionable (i.e. wrong) to substitute common prayer with other brothers and sisters and in doing so, miss Sunday Mass. Objectively, to knowingly receive communion in other churches or to fail to participate in the Sunday Mass without just cause is a mortal sin.'

I hope we recall that St. Paul talked about people who receive the Eucharist unworthily. And early in the second century, there was a great Father of the Church, a Bishop and Doctor named St. Irenaeus.

He wrote these words, "For just as bread from the earth, receiving the invocation from God is no longer common bread but a Eucharist consisting of two elements, an earthly and a heavenly, even so, our bodies partaking of the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, possessing as they do the hope of resurrection, unto life eternal." Gosh we could spend a homily on just those words alone...

This sacredness and reality of Christ present in the Eucharist – this is the central sign of our faith. This is who we are at our core. The holy water and the candles and the vestments, the fact that Catholics genuflect – these are all signs with a small 'S.' And so today, if some mixed faith couple of good heart were asked what it is that makes Catholics different, the two of them might recount what takes place in the Mass. And how He, Jesus is again made known to them in the breaking of bread.

Remember this prayer? Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Amen.

Reading 1

Acts 2:14, 22-33

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven,
raised his voice, and proclaimed:

“You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem.

Let this be known to you, and listen to my words.

You who are Israelites, hear these words.

Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God
with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs,

which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know.

This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God,
you killed, using lawless men to crucify him.

But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death,
because it was impossible for him to be held by it.

For David says of him:

I saw the Lord ever before me,

with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.

Therefore my heart has been glad and my tongue has exulted;

my flesh, too, will dwell in hope,

because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld,

nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption.

You have made known to me the paths of life;

you will fill me with joy in your presence.

“My brothers, one can confidently say to you

about the patriarch David that he died and was buried,

and his tomb is in our midst to this day.

But since he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he abandoned to the netherworld nor did his flesh see corruption.

God raised this Jesus;

of this we are all witnesses.

Exalted at the right hand of God,

he received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured him forth, as you see and hear.”

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11

R. (11a) Lord, you will show us the path of life.

or:

R. Alleluia.

Keep me, O God, for in you I take refuge;

I say to the LORD, “My Lord are you.”

O LORD, my allotted portion and my cup,
you it is who hold fast my lot.

R. Lord, you will show us the path of life.

or:

R. Alleluia.

I bless the LORD who counsels me;

even in the night my heart exhorts me.

I set the LORD ever before me;

with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.

R. Lord, you will show us the path of life.

or:

R. Alleluia.

Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices,
my body, too, abides in confidence;
because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld,
nor will you suffer your faithful one to undergo corruption.

R. Lord, you will show us the path of life.

or:

R. Alleluia.

You will show me the path to life,
abounding joy in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever.

R. Lord, you will show us the path of life.

or:

R. Alleluia.

Reading II

1 Pt 1:17-21

Beloved:

If you invoke as Father him who judges impartially
according to each one's works,
conduct yourselves with reverence during the time of your sojourning,
realizing that you were ransomed from your futile conduct,
handed on by your ancestors,
not with perishable things like silver or gold

but with the precious blood of Christ
as of a spotless unblemished lamb.

He was known before the foundation of the world
but revealed in the final time for you,
who through him believe in God
who raised him from the dead and gave him glory,
so that your faith and hope are in God.

Gospel

Lk 24:13-35

That very day, the first day of the week,
two of Jesus' disciples were going
to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus,
and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred.
And it happened that while they were conversing and debating,
Jesus himself drew near and walked with them,
but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.
He asked them,
"What are you discussing as you walk along?"
They stopped, looking downcast.
One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply,
"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem
who does not know of the things
that have taken place there in these days?"
And he replied to them, "What sort of things?"
They said to him,

“The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene,
who was a prophet mighty in deed and word
before God and all the people,
how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over
to a sentence of death and crucified him.
But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel;
and besides all this,
it is now the third day since this took place.
Some women from our group, however, 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 indeed seen a vision of angels
who announced that he was alive.
Then some of those with us went to the tomb
and found things just as the women had described,
but him they did not see.”
And he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are!
How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!
Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things
and enter into his glory?”
Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets,
he interpreted to them what referred to him
in all the Scriptures.
As they approached the village to which they were going,
he gave the impression that he was going on farther.
But they urged him, “Stay with us,
for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.”

So he went in to stay with them.

And it happened that, while he was with them at table,
he took 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
while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?”

So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem

where they found gathered together

the eleven and those with them who were saying,

“The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!”

Then the two recounted

what had taken place on the way

and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.