

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Third Sunday of Easter
April 26, 2020

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During Eastertide the Gospels at Sunday Mass give us the first reactions of the disciples to the Resurrection. And the *freshness of discovery* still remains in these written accounts after two thousand years. That is because Jesus is the Living Lord. The flock of Christ was not predisposed to faith when these encounters happened. Mary Magdalene mistook Jesus for a cemetery groundskeeper. Peter and John thought there had been a grave robbery. In the Upper Room the apostles sifted confusing evidence, but the plan on the table was an exit strategy: how to get out of Jerusalem to avoid arrest. And the two disciples on the road to Emmaus were implementing that strategy. They were in process of walking to their home seven miles outside the city. Cleopas and his companion, who may have been his wife, were voting with their feet!

In today's gospel passage we see the Risen Lord ever so gently going after two hurt souls who are trying to get away from their sad memory. These people have turned their back on shattered dreams and set out for home in an attempt to pick up the pieces and sort out their lives without faith. And *right there*, in that moment, Jesus draws near.

It is true most accounts of the Easter events show the Risen Lord with the apostolic college. That is as it should be. The people reading and hearing the written gospel will always be people like you and me: we have faith because of the eyewitness of the apostles, and because Jesus is the Living Lord Who makes the apostolic testimony live. But these two people on the road to Emmaus were not apostles. They were *small fry*. They were ordinary people. In the secular world there are no reserved seats for these people. But they too, every one of them, are the object of the Lord's infinite care and solicitude.

When we first hear about Cleopas and his companion they are looking sad and downcast in the bright daylight on the road. That evening they express concern for their Unknown Fellow Traveler not to continue on the road in darkness after sundown. But after the Breaking of the Bread there is no longer any concern about darkness! Picture them stumbling across the fields by the light of the Paschal full moon, full of faith and joy, heading back to Jerusalem to share the good news. *The Risen Christ had come back for them.*

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We love that Blessed Jesus has power to change hearts and literally turn lives around. *And we love that He is our Saviour.*