

Father Tom's Homily - Third Sunday of Easter: The Walk of Grief

Two men are taking a long walk of shock, disappointment and grief. They were walking from Jerusalem to their home in Emmaus. It was a long and sad walk. Emmaus was about seven miles from Jerusalem, about a 4-hour walk. The men had been disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. They heard Him speak about the love of the Father. He said that they should pray to God addressing Him by "Abba". They had heard Him speak about the love we need to extend to others. The disciples had witness His deeds. Perhaps they were present when he raised up from the dead the son of the widow of Nain, or little Tabitha, or Lazarus. There was also some of his healings. Certainly, they were present when he multiplied the bread and fish for thousands. They were sure that Jesus was the Messiah. THEN, everything shattered into pieces. Jesus was arrested the Thursday before. He was treated horribly that night and then on the next day, scourged and crucified. The disciples thought, "Surely, this could not happen to the Messiah." They were shocked and disappointed. And they were in grief. They had loved this Jesus, and now He was gone. Then on Sunday, Jesus was not in the tomb. The disciples had "lost" their best mate, Jesus. Many of us have been on that road of grief. When our lives are going well, we express content. Our plans are all set. Then in a flash, something unforeseen happens; tragically and life changing. This is exactly what we are experiencing today. For nearly a month now, the whole world has been experiencing and witnessing the scourge of the pandemic of COVID-19. This has put our communities in disarray. We have to adapt to this new reality in the middle of our struggling with grief; loss of jobs, dealing with life threatening diseases. Everything changed. When tragedy strikes, it is quite normal for us to ask many questions. The main questions we ask are "Why? Why did this happen?" and "Where were you God? Are you even there when I need you?" When the disciples on the road asked the "*WHY*" question, they were taught that the answer to their question could

be found in Scripture. The stranger that joined them on the walk shared with them about the Suffering Servant of Isaiah and then how the prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus suffering, death and resurrection.

When we ask the “*WHY*” question, we also need to listen to what the Word of God is saying to us. Scripture tells us that there is infinitely more to life than the here and now. It tells us that we are made for eternity. It tells us that our loved ones have transitioned from this life to the next because physical life ends but the spiritual life remains. God can and does write straight with the crooked lines of our lives. How amazing this is to know that. We need to be exposed to the Word of God to deal with our lives. We need to read the Word of God, meditate and see how the passages of the Bible relate to our lives. Our hearts will also burn when we realize that everything that happens in our lives can and will be used by God as part of His plan. That is the best answer we can come upon for the “*WHY*” question.

Then there is the “*WHERE*” question. Where were you God when this happened? God answers, “I was right there with you.” He is here with us now, rejoicing with us in the good times and crying with us in the painful, distress times. God is not remote, removed from us. In fact, it is the direct opposite. He is so close to us that He wants us to receive His Body and Blood inside of us. We do every time we receive communion. Then we come even closer to Him. Those disciples recognized the presence of God in the breaking of the bread. We call on our faith and recognize the presence of God in the Eucharist. We need to receive communion so we can cherish the very presence of God within us. We need to call out to Him for help. We need to ask Him to help us hold on to our faith and prayers. We face hurt and pain in the grief. But we will never walk alone. Jesus is there walking with us, calming us, soothing us with His Word and strengthening us with His Eucharist. Our lives are a journey with the Lord on the road to Emmaus.