



In the Breaking of Bread

Homily for the 2nd Sunday of Easter

April 30, 2017

5:00 p.m., 8:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m.

1. Of all the experiences I had in Rome on my sabbatical, the wedding reception I attended was one of the most unique
 - the bride's mom, Jean Lanzilotti, had heard about a movement called EatWith.com
 - travelers to major cities like Rome or Paris can have the opportunity to eat an authentic meal in the home of a resident of the city
 - in our case, there were 6 of us from Cleveland, and 7 others from around the world
 - we were greeted with hugs and smiles by our hostess Barbara and, for one evening, we were treated like royalty, like we were the most important people in the world
 - we sat at table with complete strangers who became companions together for a tremendous evening of wine, conversation, a 6 course meal and breaking bread together
 - we dined on appetizers of puffed pastry with mushrooms and bruschetta, lasagna with a white mushroom sauce, stuffed tomatoes with rice, homemade gnocchi with a green olive sauce, veal with potatoes and red peppers, and an Italian crème cake – hungry yet?
 - it was an event unlike anything I had ever experienced and will always be a treasured event in my life
 - I arrived home at the North American College at 1:00 a.m. in the morning, not only with a stomach filled with awesome food, but with a heart overflowing with love
 - as different as we all were, in the breaking of bread, we discovered a common bond, a human connection and a respect that you can't read about or encounter any other way except by your own experience
2. Today's Gospel is one of the most important stories of Jesus' appearance after his Resurrection
 - though it may be hard for us to fathom, this was no ordinary stroll on a Sunday afternoon
 - Emmaus was located to the west of Jerusalem and it was a 6-8 hour journey on foot
 - there was lots of time to talk, to reflect, to interpret, to understand
 - the road to Emmaus cuts east to west through a part of Judea that recalls events from nearly every stage of Israel's long history, starting with Abraham
 - as each site was passed on the road, Jesus could simply point to it and invite the disciples to recall Israel's many attempts to live out God's covenant with them – some of them very faithful and others, not so much
 - in each case, Jesus could point to the hope that Israel had for God to be present among

them, guiding and guarding, as they would strive to live out their call to be a blessing to the world

- but he's also attentive to the pain and the sorrow and the disappointment of those who were on the journey; discussing their hopes and dreams. Jesus is a good listener and
- the model teacher, drawing out from his students all that they had learned, studied, experienced and understood. Their hearts are on fire as he explained the Scriptures to them.

3. As they came toward the end of their journey, Luke says that Jesus "appeared to be going further."

- But the two disciples persuaded him to stay for dinner
- and when he breaks bread with them they recognize his presence with them

4. This pattern – word and sacrament, instruction and breaking bread, is the foundation for the Eucharist we celebrate each week

- we hear the Scriptures opened up for us, as we interpret Jesus' role in our lives today
- and then bread is taken, blessed, broken and shared as a reminder that in this meal, Christ reveals himself to us just as he did for the disciples
- of everything we do, as Church, the Eucharist is the most important
- as the document *Lumen Gentium* taught us the Eucharist is the "source and summit" of the Christian life
- everything leads to it and everything flows from it

5. Imagine what it would be like if world leaders, could break bread together?

- if families who were at odds with each other could sit at table and discuss?
- recognizing the need for greater understanding, Starbucks began a new promotion in March
- they'll give you a free cup of coffee if you drink it with someone you disagree with
- it's called, "Hi from the Other Side"
- Users sign up on an app via Facebook and then they're paired with someone nearby who identifies with the opposing political party
- each user receives half of the information necessary to unlock a Starbucks gift card
- then once the participants meet up, they work together to unlock the gift cards and receive a complimentary cup of coffee
- you never know what's brewing until you're willing to let someone espresso themselves!

6. The hope is that we can all experience our hearts burning within us as we hear God's word and that Christ will be made known to us – in our stories, our understanding, our compassion, our willingness to listen – in the breaking of bread and in the sharing of our lives