

Third Sunday of Easter – April 26, 2020

Acts 2, 14-23 – 1 Peter 1: 17-21 – Luke 24: 13-35

I have come to describe these past few weeks as our “Babylonian Exile. ”¹ We are properly “exiled” from being able to gather as Church, in our church to celebrate the Eucharist. During this time I have made what efforts I could, with very limited technological abilities, , to maintain a degree of contact through social media. As a result of even these meager efforts, there was a great response to a post of a photo of the church altar as it has been decorated for Easter. The number of acknowledgments and comments made suggested strongly to me that the opportunity to gather as a parish and to celebrate Eucharist is sincerely missed.

This awareness makes even more poignant the story recorded by Saint Luke in today’s Gospel selection. The Lord is recognized by the disciples who had traveled to Emmaus, not in the Scriptures that had been discussed, nor even in his physical presence with them. The Lord was recognized in the breaking of bread, a clear allusion to sharing of Eucharist.

More than in any other way, the sharing of Eucharist is how we express our faith in the Risen Lord. It is the sharing in Eucharist, the breaking of bread, that distinguishes us in our sacramental Catholic faith. What we do when we gather to celebrate Eucharist is more than a simple ritual that is performed. It is more than a casual recalling of what Jesus once did. It is the presence of the Risen Lord in the

mysterious ways that he has chosen, in the bread and the wine which, in faith, we profess to be the Real Presence of the Lord.

As the disciples walked along it was the same Jesus who joined with them. As they heard the Scriptures recounted for them, it was the same Jesus. But it was only in the breaking of bread, only in the experience of that particular event, that the disciples were able to realize what was happening to them, who it was that was with them.

Saint Luke, in recoding of the details of this event, wants to make it clear to the early Christians and to us that it is in the breaking of bread, the Eucharist, that the Real Presence of the Risen Lord is to be recognized and to be known.

We most certainly hear God speak to us in the Scriptures that are read when we gather, but the Lord seeks to be so intimately bound to us that he has chosen this means to give himself entirely to us. How extraordinary are these moments to be! It is only appropriate that we long for the opportunity to gather once again. Perhaps it is our absence from these moments now that will encourage us all the more to recognize the great gift of the Eucharist offered to us by our good and gracious God.

1 Babylonian exile is the period in Jewish history during which a number of people from the ancient Kingdom of Judah were captives in ancient Babylon.