

There is so much going on in today's gospel, and all of it is important.

We are in Luke's gospel, and it is still Easter. The women have discovered the empty tomb. Peter has run to see for himself before sharing with the others. But no one has seen the risen Lord.

As Cleopas and another unnamed disciple walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus, talking over the events of the past three days, they are joined by Jesus, whom they were kept from recognizing. Why? This seems to happen in a few of Jesus' resurrection appearances. Did his resurrected form look different from the Jesus they had followed for three years? And how? While this would be a logical assumption, as if anything about the miracle of the resurrection was logical, I think something else is going on.

Remember, the disciples were looking for a Messiah who would redeem Israel - who would restore Israel to its former glory - drive out the Roman Empire in favor of a Jewish Empire, return the Davidic line to the throne. Perhaps it is as simple as the disciples were so fixated on what could have been, what they expected to be, that they couldn't see all that God had done to redeem not only Israel, but the whole of creation. "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." I wonder how many times God enters into our lives and saves us, only we miss it because we are busy praying that God save us in the way we prescribe. How many times do we fail to see, just as these disciples failed to see, God's saving action in our lives.

It's obvious they don't recognize Jesus as they recount all that had happened to him over the last three days. That Jesus asks them to tell him isn't some kind of annoying ploy, but rather a way to get them to talk about their experiences in order to make meaning for themselves. Isn't that what happens to us when we retell a significant event in our lives? (Isn't that what therapy is all about?)

Jesus then begins to recount the whole of salvation history, beginning with Moses, and all the ways God has acted on behalf of God's chosen people. That something is happening to these two isn't clear until later, but Jesus is breaking through.

Maybe that is why they invite Jesus to "stay with us" as evening looms. It was certainly providential that they did. For when he repeated his words and actions from the Last Supper, when he took bread, blessed, and broke it, their eyes were opened to their Risen Lord. Luke tells us Jesus then vanished from their sight.

As they quickly return to Jerusalem, to tell the others what they had seen and heard, they talked about the burning in their hearts when Jesus opened up the scriptures to them. In the span of a few hours, they knew Jesus - in the scriptures and in the breaking of the bread. 2000 years later this is how Jesus is revealed to us, too.

There is power in the Eucharist, the power to know Jesus, to let Jesus feed us, to save us. Adults sometimes, erroneously, think children should not receive communion until they understand it. These two disciples barely understood, and Jesus was standing before them, feeding them through scripture and sacrament. But there is something very intuitive about kids and the Eucharist; they have a depth of understanding of Jesus' presence that, I think, we lose as we get older. I see it in

their faces - the joy and delight. And it can't be just the wafer, because there is little appealing about that. May we all know Jesus in the broken bread the way the children among us do.

And may our hearts burn as we hear, as we read, scripture ourselves. There is so much power in our sacred story; power to shape and change our lives; power to show us the depth of God's love, of Jesus' mercy and care. Power to show us who we are in God's eyes; power to let us be who God created us to be.

In the days following the death and resurrection of Jesus, as our sacred story was still being written, those who knew him best struggled to make meaning of what had happened. Why did Jesus have to die? What was God up to in the raising of Jesus from the dead? What about the Messiah? These are questions we struggle with even today.

The answers to our questions, if we are asking the right questions, can be found in our sacred story. If we approach scripture as the disciples approached the Messiah, with our own biases and preconceived ideas, we may find an answer, but it might not be God's answer. If we approach scripture full of wonder at its awesome power, much like a child who receives the body of Christ into his or her hands, then I believe we will find God present there; just as we know Jesus present at the Eucharist.

God's presence in our lives is the heart of our sacred story. May it forever cause our hearts to burn as it did those two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus, and may we, like they, know Jesus present in his sacred story, and in the breaking of bread, and the prayers.