

A 3 Easter 2026
Saint Barnabas's Church, Falmouth MA
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Luke 24:13-35

As we live into the joy of this Easter season, we encounter a story of the risen Christ engaging the disciples on their way to Emmaus

The story begins on a confused note, with the disciples stumbling their way out of Jerusalem, caught up in their own chaotic feelings and completely missing their first encounter with the risen Christ

As such, the story provides a metaphor for our own culture and—perhaps—for our own spiritual lives

Are we flummoxed by our own fears and feelings, completely missing resurrection power, or are we truly disciples whose hearts burn within for the risen Lord in this world?

Our story—found only in Luke's Gospel—remains among a half-dozen resurrection appearances that transform a dispirited, ragtag group of followers into an elite missionary force

On Easter, we saw Mary Magdalene as the first witness to the resurrection, last week doubting Thomas's transformation, and now we find Cleopas and his companion charged up and giving witness to a life transformed

Notice that Cleopas and his companion never figure out salvation on their own—frankly, they seem a little clueless

Rather, the risen Christ claims them, opens their eyes, and explains the holy mysteries of God's redeeming the world

Jesus connects back to Moses, he encounters them around the table, and he promises resurrection power to all ages in the breaking of the bread

The encounter with Jesus and the promise of future relationship fuels a world of miraculous change and expectation, and the resurrection continues to empower your actions and mine

The radical hospitality of today's story finds new meaning in our polarized world, when we wrestle to redefine civility in our moral and public discourse

How does our Easter witness differentiate us from other people of good will throughout the ages?

Jesus himself had fully embraced the most egregious extreme of violence and incivility—crucifixion on the cross—and yet his first post-resurrection words are “peace” and “do not be afraid”

The risen Christ never upbraids the hapless disciples who had abandoned him; rather, he breathes the power of the Holy Spirit into them and he communes for the night with them in a way that changes them forever

Resurrection life embraces a civility—viewing the other as bearing the face of Christ—by which we transform our families, workplace, parish life, political discourse and international relationships

The risen Christ calls us to a ministry of servant leadership where we speak honest truths in caring and ethical ways, moving beyond anger or self-preoccupation to witness the risen Christ dwelling among us in large and small ways

It can be tempting to over-interpret this story and assume that Christian hearts must always burn with joy—which would be a wildly utopian standard

Certainly, most of us will take hearts burning with joy over hearts burning with hatred, where anger becomes the rage

But we never know the long-term story of what becomes of Cleopas and his sidekick, who is never named

They jump onto the scriptural stage for their momentary encounter with Jesus, and then they fade back into the crowd

Unlike Peter, whose cowardice and impulse stamp him with character, unlike last Sunday's doubting Thomas, the empiricist who likes his truths bloody, unlike Paul, whose irritableness and tenderness make him unforgettable, today's two characters become silhouettes, they become Everyman or Everywoman

Although this resurrection appearance by Jesus creates its own drama, a sleeper verse in our story still captures our imagination 2000 years later

As Assisting Bishop Mary Glasspool points out, the second half of our story hinges on Verse 29, in which the two disciples urge Jesus to stay with them, and he does!

"But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them."

In other words, the focal point of the story happens when *the disciples invite Jesus into their home, and he accepts!*

In our lives of faith, it is more important to *invite* the Risen Christ into our lives, than it is to recognize that the Risen Christ is there. Hopefully, we can *sense* Christ's Presence in our lives

As fellow travelers, we point to this risen Christ when a fellow pilgrim's courage fades or becomes mired in ambiguity

Ideally, we recognize that Christ is *always* present. But there may be times when we don't. There may be times in our lives when we forget, or when we feel desperate or out of control. There are certainly times when we don't *recognize* the Risen Christ in our midst

As the body of Christ, we support one another in prayer and witness to this Good News of Christ's continuing presence among us

The disciples commune for the night with Jesus, and they gain a vision that changes their lives

They see the big picture of Christ's place in God's salvation of the world, and their hearts burn with joy over the mystery of redemption

They break bread and bond as a united community of transformed disciples, and their contagious joy spreads to those who were not eye-witnesses

Self-transcendence leads to community and fulfillment, and they move from self-absorption to servant ministry and caring for others

They move from parsimony, fear and preoccupation to abundance, service and joyful expectation, running back to Jerusalem

The disciples' time with Jesus was brief and fleeting: their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight

On the other hand, their yearning, burning hearts must have filled them with a lifetime of desire

Some 2000 years later, we continue sharing our stories of chance encounters with Christ, however fleeting they may have been

Some of us burn brightly with the passion of our faith, while others maintain a warm inner glow, but each of us has been touched in some way, or I doubt that we would be here

In whatever shape we arrive and in whatever shape we depart, we praise God whether our earthly circumstances are ecstatic, humdrum or sorrowful

The trick is to keep Christian hope alive, to keep the flame glowing without burning ourselves or scorching others, so that the Good News may be caught as well as taught to the world about us

As we heard was true in our first lesson in Acts, as I hope is true at the parish we love: they ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day, the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.