

April 19, 2026—Third Sunday of Easter

Two men were on a journey to the town of Emmaus. They were disheartened by the horrific suffering and death imposed upon Jesus three days earlier. They had hoped He was the Messiah who would save Israel, but now their hopes were destroyed.

A journey or a quest is often used to describe our life in this world. Most of the time we make plans for a journey: who is going, what route you will take, where you will stay, what are the means of travel—and a goal, the place you are heading for. The journey of life is not so certain. Those with us on the journey of life can change as the years roll on; even the best of plans may not come to fruition and other choices present themselves. Two things in life we must keep before us, like the two disciples in the Gospel on their journey home.

Several of the appearances of the risen Jesus began with those who were closest to Him, not recognizing Him. An example was Mary Magdalene; she thought the risen Jesus was a gardener. The same happens to the disciples who were joined by Jesus on the road; His identity was hidden from them. Recognizing their despair, Jesus began explaining the Scripture passages from the Old Testament that foretold His mission and particularly, the meaning of His suffering and death. As Jesus spoke to them, they later realized: **“Were not our hearts burning within us while He spoke to us on the way and opened the Scripture to us?”**

In the Holy Mass, we reflect on these prophecies and their fulfillment in the Gospels continually throughout the year. The first principal part of the Mass is called the Liturgy of the Word. In this part of the Mass, you can say, we are walking on the road with Jesus like the two disciples and we listen to God’s great plan for our salvation as it is revealed in the Sacred Scriptures.

The homily is meant to help us apply those words and events and actions of God to our own life. There was a time when those who study the liturgy were saying that we should just listen to the Word of God and not read along with it in a missalette or other worship aid. I always thought that they were wrong; using two senses—hearing and sight—seem better than only one sense. In any case, the Holy Spirit speaks to us in a special way in the Scriptures during Holy Mass, if we are attentive.

Young Anthony went to Holy Mass one day and heard the Gospel: **“If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor and you will have**

treasure in heaven; come, follow Me.” He had heard those words many times before, as we have, but that time he took them to heart. He sold his possessions and began a life of prayer and penance in the desert. He is St. Anthony the Abbot who began the monastic movement in the east. If we fight distractions and focus our attention, the Holy Spirit can speak to our hearts, too. Let’s give Him the opportunity in each Mass; that is what active participation means!

The disciples finally arrived at their destination and asked Jesus to stay with them and have supper. He sat down at the table, and His actions resemble what He did at the Last Supper. The verbs used are the same four: He took bread, He said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. The second major part of the Mass is called the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It mirrors the second half of the story of the two disciples. The priest, at the altar, takes bread, gives thanks, breaks it and gives it as Holy Bread in Holy Communion.

In the Gospel, Jesus then disappeared right before their eyes. It seems strange for Him to do this! But, there is deep meaning in it. As amazing as the resurrection appearances of Jesus were, the disciples needed to get to know Him in a new way. They were no longer to look for Jesus in His resurrected Body; they had to get to know Him in His Eucharistic Presence. When they got together in His Name around the apostles, as His first priests, they were to encounter Him as the Bread of Life in the Holy Mass. He feeds our souls; He strengthens our faith and hope; He remains with us in the Holy Eucharist reserved in the Tabernacle or exposed in the monstrance.

I mentioned earlier that we must keep two things before us in the journey of life, like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. First, we need to know the goal of life and let it guide our actions and decisions in this world. For them it was home, for us it is Home, but not here on earth. Our true home is in heaven. The early Christians put it this way: **“We are in the world, but not of the world.”** While we must live and work and pray and raise our families in this world, we need to judge or discern which things are leading us to heaven and which are not.

The second thing we must do on the journey of life is to walk with Jesus. The disciples did not recognize Jesus at their side, but He was there. In our struggles in life, we sometimes think that Jesus is not with us, that He has abandoned us. He is by our side as truly as He was with the disciples. We must look for the risen Christ in Holy Communion and in the Tabernacle and Adoration. No matter where we are on the journey of life, He is only a prayer away!

