

3rd Sunday of Easter A

May 8, 2011

Jesus the hiker. Isn't that a great image, Jesus hiking with us? In two days, I will be climbing a hill in the Smoky Mountains; I hope to meet Jesus on those beautiful trails. In two weeks, we will have our first St. Bernadette Parish Hike, in East Fork State Park. Come, join us; Someone we cannot see will be walking with our group.

Jesus the hiker explains the scriptures to Cleopas (and we think his wife), and then Jesus breaks the Bread with them. And they recognize Him. That sounds a lot like the Catholic Mass, doesn't it? Mass isn't a strange ritual that we have to sit through to be a good Catholic and keep God happy! At our best, we are here each week primarily ***to meet the Risen Jesus—in the word and in the Breaking of Bread.*** The trick is to have our eyes opened.

Archeologists have never found the town of Emmaus, after numerous excavations. Perhaps there is no Emmaus. Because Cleopas and his wife have left the disciples in Jerusalem; they are going back home. They have given up on Jesus. They are going nowhere. It's as if St. Luke wants to say, "If you are not following Jesus to heaven, whom are you following? And where are you going?" But instead of condemning Cleopas and his wife, Jesus sets them on the right path, just as he would soon do for St. Peter.

I love to hike. To be honest, I expected to be further down the path by now. I expected to see Jesus more clearly, follow him more closely than I do. Too often I stumble and fall, or wander off the path, or just forget who I am. Maybe you do too sometimes.

And then I remember that Jesus' last hike was up a hill called Calvary, carrying a 100# crossbeam. And he walked that for me, for all the times I've lost my way, or turned back, or complained about the heavy load. And each of you is on a journey too, perhaps in a valley right now, or maybe a mountaintop---hopefully in the right direction, hopefully making some progress every day. And we pray that Jesus will bring back those who have strayed, those who have left him, those who are lost and going nowhere.

So, I head for the mountains, hoping to meet Jesus there. And may all our journeys lead us to our true home.