

3 Easter Yr A, 8/05/2011
Lk 24:13-35
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"The Emmaus Road and Mother's Day"

This Sunday is Mother's Day, so I thought you'd enjoy this list of things our mothers taught us:

- My Mother taught me LOGIC: "If you fall off that swing and break your neck, you can't go to the store with me," as well as, "If everyone else jumped off a cliff would you do it, too?"
- My Mother taught me MEDICINE: "If you don't stop crossing your eyes, they're going to freeze that way."
- My Mother taught me TO THINK AHEAD: "If you don't pass your spelling test, you'll never get a good job!"
- My Mother taught me TO MEET A CHALLENGE: "What were you thinking? Answer me when I talk to you...Don't talk back to me!"
- My Mother taught me HUMOR: "When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don't come running to me."
- My Mother taught me how to BECOME AN ADULT: "If you don't eat your vegetables, you'll never grow up."
- My mother taught me about GENETICS: "You are just like your father!"
- My mother taught me about my ROOTS: "Do you think you were born in a barn?"
- My mother taught me about the WISDOM OF AGE: "When you get to be my age, you will understand," or, "I will explain it all when you get older."
- My mother taught me about ANTICIPATION: "Just wait until your father gets home."

- My mother taught me about RECEIVING: "You are going to get it when I get you home."
- My mother taught me RELIGION: "You better pray that will come out of the carpet."
- My mother taught me about TIME TRAVEL: "If you don't straighten up, I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week!"
- My mother taught me FORESIGHT: "Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."
- My mother taught me about the science of OSMOSIS: "Shut your mouth and eat your supper!"
- My mother taught me about CONTORTIONISM: "Will you look at the dirt on the back of your neck!"
- My mother taught me about STAMINA: "You'll sit there until all that spinach is finished."
- My mother taught me about WEATHER: "It looks as if a tornado swept through your room."
- My mother taught me about HYPOCRISY: "If I've told you once, I've told you a million times: Don't exaggerate!"
- My mother taught me THE CIRCLE OF LIFE: "I brought you into this world, and I can take you out."
- My mother taught me BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION: "Stop acting like your father!"
- My mother taught me about ENVY: "There are millions of less fortunate children in this world who don't have wonderful parents like you do!"
- And the all-time favorite thing my mother taught me, JUSTICE: "One day you will have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you. Then you'll see what it's like! I can't wait!"

Thanks, Mom, for all the things you taught me!1

Speaking of the importance of our mothers; as I read and thought about today's gospel; it occurred to me that there are some parallels between the two disciples on the road to Emmaus who encountered the risen Christ and how we encounter and relate to mothers.

For example, Luke tells us that while the two disciples were walking "their eyes were kept from recognizing" Jesus. I wonder why they could not recognize Jesus. Were they so focussed on each other and so engaged in an intensive conversation that they paid no attention to who this stranger was with them? Or was it, as some scholars suggest, the time of day when the sun was setting and they could not see that well as they walked in the sun's direction? Whatever the case might have been, they do fail to recognize that it was Jesus right there on the road walking with them.

How often do we fail to recognize mothers? They might be there, but we fail to see them—perhaps because we are too focussed on other people or other things. Mothers make a huge contribution to families, the church, and society as a whole—yet; they still may not be recognized by us because we are too self-focussed.

As the Emmaus story continues to unfold, Jesus is able to speak with the two disciples in a very loving, caring and pastoral way. He asks them the right questions so they open up to him and tell him of their dashed hopes, disappointments, sorrow and grief. He listens to them. Often our mothers do the same thing for us. They love and care for us; engage us in conversation in such a way to open us up; and they listen to us.

After the two disciples tell their story about Jesus without recognizing that the very Jesus whom they are speaking about is ironically with them—then it's Jesus' turn to speak and they listen. What they hear is amazing! Jesus explains to them the meaning of the Torah and the prophetic scriptures that refer to himself and God's purpose for him as the Messiah. Yet, the two disciples still don't

recognize Jesus. Don't you wonder why they could be so slow to recognize Jesus? For example, as he was talking, why did they not recognize his voice? Jesus is still a stranger to them. I wonder if we are any different—are there times that Jesus is with us, yet we fail to recognize him?

Anyways, as they reach Emmaus, Jesus is about to go further, but it is now evening and they invite him to stay on with them.

In the King James Version of scripture, which nurtured many of us, the invitation of the two travelers reads, "Abide with us; for it is toward evening and the day is far spent," words that were the inspiration for that beloved hymn, "Abide with me/ Fast falls the eventide." The hymn was written by Henry Francis Lyte, for 25 years the vicar of the parish at Devonshire, England. He was 54 years old, broken in health, and saddened by dissensions in his congregation. On Sunday, September 4, 1847, he preached his farewell sermon and went home to rest. After tea in the afternoon, he retired to his study. In an hour or two, he rejoined his family, holding in his hand the manuscript of his immortal hymn.

Lyte's "eventide" has nothing to do with the end of the natural day but rather the end of life. "Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day/ Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away." The words are about the faith that faces life and death fearlessly and triumphantly in the light of the cross and the empty tomb. Thus Lyte could conclude, "Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee/ In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me." Vicar Lyte died three months later.²

There is more to the story about Abide with me. According to a resident whom I met several years ago; who grew up in Vicar Lyte's hometown; in remembrance of Vicar Lyte and his immortal hymn; you can hear the hymn being played from the chimes in the church steeple early every evening.

Coming back to our gospel, Jesus did abide with those two disciples at Emmaus long ago. They went inside, sat down at a table together. Jesus then “took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.” Notice these actions of Jesus. The same actions as when he instituted the Lord’s Supper on that night before he was crucified. Although Luke does not say this was a sacramental meal; there is, in Jesus’ action and his presence a sense of the meal being sacramental. So, too, I think, whenever we eat a meal together with others; if love is present in the eating and drinking; Jesus also is present; hence in that sense every meal is sacramental. Whenever we see and bless and share the food as a gift from God; there is something sacramental in such a meal. In that moment of Jesus eating with those two disciples, their eyes were opened; finally they saw and realized it was Jesus.

So, too, Jesus is present with us as we gather around his Word and the sacrament of Holy Communion. The question is: Do we see and recognize him in our midst? Notice what happens after Jesus is recognized and leaves the two disciples. The two disciples, even though it’s evening, go right back to Jerusalem to tell their story about their meeting up with the risen Christ. Once there, stories of the risen Christ were shared by the other disciples. So, too, you, me, all of us here have our stories to tell. Our mothers have their stories to tell. Let’s keep telling our stories; for in so doing the risen Christ lives among and within us. Amen!

1 Cited from: *Preaching Now* online newsletter, Michael Duduit, Editor, Vol 10, No 17, May 3, 2011.

2 Cited from: David E. Leininger, *Lectioary Tales For The Pulpit: Series VI Cycle A* (Lima, Ohio: CSS Publishing Co., Inc., 2007), p. 84.