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“What are you discussing as you walk along?” (Luke 24:16).

Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14, 22-33; Ps 16; 1 Pet 1:17-21; Luke 24:13-35

For many of us in pandemic lockdown, the chance to get out for a walk in the neighborhood is a Godsend. I meet others at a safe distance, and we nod to acknowledge our common lot. Sometimes I overhear conversations, mostly lighthearted but also serious about family concerns and even losses. As a stranger, I would never intrude on such exchanges, even in normal times. A death for sure.

The disciples on the road to Emmaus were grieving, and their footsteps must have been as heavy as their hearts as they discussed the disastrous events in Jerusalem. Others in their group were clearly in shock, including some women who were claiming their crucified friend had been seen alive. Just then a stranger joined them and asked what they were discussing.

As an image, walking and talking are a good description of human life. Time draws us forward through predictable life stages, and we learn to give meaning to our journey by sharing stories of our achievements and disappointments. The death of loved is one event that can shatter our story and force us to reinterpret who we are, where we are going and why. Millions of lives have been interrupted by the pandemic, leaving behind grieving families shocked into the challenge to renew everything they believe and hope for.

What makes the road to Emmaus a universal story is that every human being must deal with the reality of death. Religion itself is a desperate attempt to either celebrate or deny death because we all know it is coming for us. The story about meeting Jesus on this universal road is for Christians the only hope we have that someone—one of us—has overcome death and can show us how to live our short lives in a new and challenging way.

Jesus defeated death by laying down his life out of love. His self-emptying example of service and his sacrificial death revealed the mysterious *kenosis* of God, who is pure love, eternally poured out as the source of Creation and the meaning of existence. His mysterious reappearance in the faith community and the promise of his continuing presence in believers generation by generation is the Good News the church proclaims to the world. Love is stronger than death, and a life devoted to love is the first stage of an existence that extends beyond this world into an eternity with the God of love.

We sing the Good News of Easter with the Psalmist: “You will show me the path to life, abounding joy in your presence, the delights at your right hand forever” (Ps 16:11).

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