Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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"Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over" (Luke 24:29).

Third Sunday of Easter

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

Triumph out of disaster and life out of death. The two disciples were locked into their own narrow understanding of what had happened in Jerusalem until they met the stranger who opened their minds and hearts. The risen Jesus was unrecognizable to them until they grasped the larger story he was telling them: “O how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe…” (Luke 24:23).

Of all the appearance stories in the Gospels, this account of the two disciples and a mysterious stranger on the road to Emmaus is perhaps the most compact summary we have of the faith of the early church. Written some 50 years after the events, it describes a pilgrim community that has come to faith through doubt and fear by gathering to break the bread and open the scriptures, and in doing so has experienced the presence of risen Christ.

An aspect of this powerful story that captures the same journey every subsequent generation of believers is the fact that the Gospel comes to us from a stranger in our midst. This is another way of saying that we only come to faith by risking all our preconceived notions of God and assumptions about how God is at work in our lives.

Encountering the cross for all of us is the crisis that breaks open our small, predictable comfort zones and compels us to choose larger and deeper than we could have imagined. Embracing the resurrection is to live larger and deeper than we could have imagined, not just because we want heaven but because heaven comes to earth here and now in those who know Jesus, alive in the world here and now.

Our personal narratives reveal this. When have you been most alive if not when some new possibility opened up for you and drew you forward into strange territory, total risk, leaving one life behind to enter another?

The stranger you met and fell in love with changed the course of your life, whether you took the road or stayed home. The new job in a different city or foreign country pushed you up a learning curve, introduced you to new people, strangers who became friends, and challenges that stretched you to the limit.

Crisis and loss that broke your heart, forced you to see life differently and disrupted your plans, also opened your eyes to new choices and made you compassionate for others who are suffering in similar ways.

The road to Emmaus is crowded with strangers, immigrants, wanderers and refugees, all of whom have stories to tell about how suffering is like breaking bread and opening our minds to God’s utterly strange and paradoxical ways of bringing good out of evil, triumph out of disaster.

Is not God among us, in us? Isn’t the crucified and risen Jesus all around us, especially at the margins of our tidy, predictable lives, eager to get us to see anew?

And when we gather as the church, should we not be ready to have our worlds broken open like bread to reveal things we long for but have forgotten how to see?

What is your Emmaus story?