

Missing Out - Luke 24:12-36
Easter 3A in a Coronavirus
World

Just before Easter, I received an email from a St. John's member who shared his story of the only Easter he had ever missed. What he meant was that besides this Easter, it was the only other Easter he did not attend worship at St. John's. He then conveyed to me the time when he was in 2nd grade and was very ill, ill enough to be in the hospital.

This was a kid who loved going to St. John's and he still does to this day. While as his parents did all they could to bring Easter to him in the hospital room, it simply didn't feel the same as going to church on that day, being around all the Alleluias, hymns, friends, and rituals that make Easter, Easter. He felt he missed more than church that year. He felt he missed out. It seemed like he had missed Easter.

I really related to him. I mean besides this very odd year of not being in the building at St. John's, I, too had actually missed Easter with a community of faith one year when I was in college. I was living in another country, in Vienna Austria, a place, where you would think, Easter would be an awesome spectacle in some cathedral. Yet, instead, I missed it.

It was Spring break, and my sister was able to come and visit me during that time. So, for a whole week, we cavorted around Austria, seeing the sights, having a grand time, but because flights are cheapest on holidays, she flew back home on Easter Sunday. So, I spent that day on the train, taking her to the airport and then getting back from the airport.

By the time I could get around to Easter, I had missed it. The whole day passed without hearing "Christ is risen." That was 1990, so imagine a world without cell phones, Facetime, Zoom or

Skype. My family was on the other side of the world, all my friends in Austria were abroad, and I was alone...missing Easter. Even in college, when I had the opportunity to have this study abroad semester, even then at that time in my life, it would have been unheard of for me to miss church on Easter Sunday. My sister gone, my faith family clear across the world, in my homesick state, I didn't even feel like saying Alleluia.

Well, we didn't miss Easter this year, not technically. We were together on Easter despite the oddity of it. Although, many of us were not tougher as we would wish either. Many of our members do not have Facebook, some are reading our service with a Bible next to them, and others are watching our services on TV that is taped ahead of time.

Oh, I'm certain we can say in some ways that this Live worship is a way to be together and it is. We are doing the best we can in what is really a very

difficult scenario. This virtual reality is indeed real. This virtual reality isn't NOT real because we are still experiencing Christ in real time, just not quite together in a physical space.

But, maybe on Easter and even today, it still doesn't fully quite feel tangible. Maybe you said the alleluias on Easter, sang the glorious hymns with Roxanne and Eric, ...but you still missed Easter because your heart was too sad or depressed, disjointed, or need I say disembodied. Like many people, perhaps you felt the sadness, difficulty, or hardship instead of the joy and hope of the resurrection.

So the story of the couple walking to Emmaus is your story. It is my story. It is our story when missing Easter. Cleopas and his companion, who was possibly his wife since he is named and his companion is not (that would not have been unusual in those days), were on their way back to a place called Emmaus. Maybe it

was their home. They missed Easter, literally and figuratively. Here they are, discouraged, sad, and we don't know why they decide to leave their friends, those followers known as the disciples of Jesus, we just know that they are probably heading home; at least, they are going away to somewhere else.

And, Jesus meets them on the way. It's interesting to me that Jesus doesn't meet them in Jerusalem where everything was going on. He doesn't wait to meet them at home in Emmaus. He meets them where they are, on the road, while missing Easter. It is during this time of frustration, sadness, and difficulty that Jesus chooses to walk with them.

And when joining them, he opens their minds and hearts to the scriptures and then revealing himself to them in the breaking of bread. Jesus meets them, and through the interpretation of Scripture and the sharing of the meal, the

eyes of these two disciples open and they recognize Easter. They see the resurrection before them. Then, they go and tell.

It is no different in our lives. Jesus often chooses to meet us in the same way. We are met by him on the road, in the journey, often when we have missed Easter, when we are in difficulty, grief or frustration. Now, I'm not saying Christ doesn't meet us during times of joy and health. He is in our entire journey. But, we often can see the risen Lord walking with us at times such as those. We can't always see Him in our lives when we are having difficulty. Yet, that is often the time Jesus comes to walk with us even though we can't always recognize him.

Here is another place Jesus meets us...the risen Lord meets us in our worship today and every time we gather. Think about the usual order of our worship service, which if at least the usual service when we worship together at St. John's.

We have a particular order for a reason. First, we gather to worship, from all our journeys from the week. Then, we hear the scripture. The scripture is interpreted or opened for us (that's called the sermon) we share the meal; although because of our being safer at home, Pastor Julie and I have chosen instead to focus upon the gift of Holy Baptism during this time. Then, lastly, we are called out to serve and proclaim wherever we are.

Doesn't that sound like the story from today's Gospel? It is as if we journey to Emmaus and back to Jerusalem again every Sunday with the Risen Lord, who is revealed to us over and over and over again. And, that is exactly what worship is meant to do, whether it is physical or virtual. It is the time where Jesus meets us to remind us that he is always with us in the journey on the way.

Where are you in the journey? Do you feel you have missed out, missed Easter still?

Can you see where Jesus meets you in your life? Do not be disheartened or troubled. He is here in this Body of Christ joined today, in his holy Word given to you, in the water that is poured as a tangible sign of the Resurrection, the risen Lord is here. Hear him in the words. Open your eyes to see him in your neighbor. Christ is meeting you and He is risen indeed! Alleluia!