

3rd Sunday of Easter

When you walk through a storm, hold your head up high and don't be afraid of the dark. At the end of the storm is a golden sky and the sweet silver song of a lark. Walk on through the wind. Walk on through the rain though your dreams be tossed and blown. Walk on, walk on with hope in your heart and you'll never walk alone.

When I began thinking about preaching on this Gospel with the two disciples walking, this old song jumped into my head. It's one that my father used to sing along with Some Enchanted Evening, Old Man River, If ever I would leave you. Well, I forgot about the song, You'll never walk alone but I'll come back to it.

Did you ever just want to walk away? Walk away from work, from the church, from any kind of challenging human situation? And why walk away? Because what you had expected from this work, from the church, from the other left you disappointed, disillusioned, dismayed?

If you know the feeling of wanting to "walk away", turn away from the hurt and the pain, saying to yourself, "It wasn't supposed to be this way", saying I had such great hopes... If you know all this, they you can relate to what those disciples on the Road to Emmaus were feeling on that Easter morning. Very simply, they were walking away from the disappointment, the failure, the dashed hopes and dreams that Jesus' crucifixion had engendered in them. They weren't going to stick around for more pain and disillusionment despite the reports that the tomb was empty and some women had said they had seen him.

The Gospel of the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus may be one if not the most popular of all the Gospels. Why is that? I believe it's because we see our selves reflected in these two disciples" We all do know what it's like to be "dissed". Disappointed, discouraged, disillusioned. Which one of us could not say "we had hoped that things wouldn't turn out this way"? The heartbreak of the two is something we've all known.

And we have known the confusion as well. Which one of us hasn't asked the question, Why? Why did it have to be this way? It wasn't supposed to be. It doesn't make sense. There is something so "us" about those two on the road.

But of course in the story it's not just the "two", there is a third and he is the one who makes the difference. He is the one who finds them, who comes to them in their disillusionment, confusion and pain and just listens. I think we know the power of someone who just "listens", listens to our stories of pain, disappointment, whatever. But this stranger does more than listen. He tries to help them understand, to give meaning to where they find themselves. He interprets their experience in a different light. And they begin to see things differently. Or as they will say later "Were not our hearts burning within us when he talked to us on the way." Definitely a different kind of "heartburn" This is a heartburn that is hopeful, filled with promise, it's a heartburn that will cause them to turn around and head back where they came from with the news that they have seen the Lord.

Did you ever just want to walk away but something or someone happens that turns you around that help you to see things through another lens or in another light? Yes, there are things that we need to walk away from but often times in life when we are overwhelmed with sadness, disillusionment, confusion something or someone comes along and we do an about face and continue the journey. Sometimes it's just a word, a song, a smile, a gesture, a meal with good conversation. Someone listening.

This very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus' disciples were walking along 16th Street and they were conversing about all the things that have been happening in the world this week. And it happened while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, what are you discussing as you go along? They stopped looking downcast, are you the only one who has not heard of the strikes in Brazil, the protests in Venezuela, the terror of Isis,

the nuclear threats in North Korea, the threat to the survival of the earth.

What would Jesus say? Could Jesus make sense of this senseless violence, cruelty, fear and terror? What would Jesus say? Perhaps he'd say, Been there. Done that and that's why I'm walking with you now. Two thousand years later. Oh, and pay attention to Francis. He's on the right track. And the disciples invited him to come with them to the church on 16th Street where they were going. "Come in with us and break bread", they invited. But he said to them, "I'll be there very soon. First I have to go downstairs to the Welcome table. I do that every week. But you'll see me again in the breaking of the bread." And they climbed the stairs and he descended.

I told you at the beginning of the homily that the song, You'll Never Walk Alone was in my head when I first started thinking about this homily. Yesterday I had written half of my homily and I was stuck. I knew I wanted to find a way of letting the gospel be relevant to your lives and our world. My window was open and you'll never guess what I heard? Someone was singing at the top of his lungs. "Walk on, walk on with hope in your heart and you'll never walk alone, you'll never walk alone. He kept walking and kept singing. Eventually all I could hear were those words far away but so near. You'll never walk alone. "Were not our hearts burning within us?