

Homily Sister Mary Virginia August 17, 2018

Two disciples leave Jerusalem and set out for Emmaus,

one was Cleopas, the other perhaps one of the many women disciples.

It's the first day of the week. The day we now call Sunday.

The Friday of Jesus' crucifixion, death, and burial is past. The Sabbath is past.

Early that morning Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James and other women found the tomb empty when they took spices to anoint the body.

These two disciples on the way to Emmaus must have heard

how two men in dazzling clothes told the women: "He is not here, but has risen."

And then they said, "Remember how Jesus told you when he was still in Galilee that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and be crucified,

and on the third day rise again." The women did remember Jesus saying these words

But the men disciples dismiss what they say as "an idle tale."

These are all the things the two disciples have to talk over.

when the liturgy of the walk to Emmaus begins. It's a seven mile walk.

Luke uses not one but two verbs to describe their conversation.

The first verb expresses the two are keeping company, companions with shared passions, talking about their deepest hopes, in this case, who *is* Jesus? What's happening?

The second verb suggests searching, examining events, investigating, sorting, trying to make sense of Jesus' teachings and promises. and what is next for them.

The liturgy of the walk is familiar, the body moving, blood flowing, mind reviving.

Our exchanges with one another take us beyond ourselves to more, sometimes to mystery.

We search for God but find ourselves in the mystery of being alive,

in the mystery of human life that Jesus comes from God to share with us.

They, too, remember Jesus saying he would suffer but rise on the third day. Hummmm?

In their remembering and talking Jesus comes near and begins to walk with them.

Remembering creates presence, but they can't see Jesus in this way of being with them.

He's a stranger who wants to know, "What are you talking about?"

The third verb: *antebelleo*, means throwing against, *Ante*, against. *Belleo*, to throw.

This is how humans make metaphors, throwing new words together that open to more, to mystery. This is what poets do.

This is what we all do to find words for the mystery in which we live.

It is what the liturgy of the walk is for: seeing anew, connecting new dots.

The two disciples can't believe the stranger hasn't heard about all the events in Jerusalem.

They tell what happened—how Jesus was a prophet in word and deed.

But our priests and leaders hand him over to crucifixion. Now it is the third day.

"Some of the woman astounded us," *astounded*; had a vision of angels who said he's alive.

Then the stranger speaks. You are foolish, and slow of heart. Such a terrible condition.

But people are always slow of heart to believe the prophet, to see beyond what they know.

Then the stranger begins to explain who Jesus is: "Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"

The messiah, the long awaited anointed one, the king, suffering??

These disciples can't imagine a messiah who suffers;

they can imagine all too well a messiah who is victorious, military leader.

their very own Caesar to make Israel independent and great again.

But not a messiah who is human like us—

a teacher who insists we find God in our everyday lives, one like us,

that we find God in the ups and downs of life, its joys and suffering.

Suffering is what the bishops questioned in Elizabeth Johnson's book, *Quest*.

Can God suffer? Yes, said young priests in South Africa who put their lives at risk every day during apartheid. Yes, God suffers with us. God accompanies us.

Yes, says Eli Wiesel who left God in the prison camp but found God never left him.

The stranger *interprets* "the things about himself in all the scriptures" (24.27).

The fourth verb: interprets, to ruminate, to bring it all back as nourishment for the future.

The stranger's words set their hearts on fire. This is what in CSJ history we call *acatamiento*, (**ah-cah-tam-iento**), being seized by God, taken over for a holy purpose.

The liturgy of the walk and word leads to the liturgy of the table.

Five more verbs. The two disciples press Jesus: "Stay with us." Remain. Abide.

The two are catching on, waking to the way Jesus is with them, wanting presence.

At the table the last four verbs: Jesus *takes* bread, *blesses* it, *breaks* it, & *gives* it to them.

The sign of Jesus' love, bread to nourish the heart, broken to be shared.

The two disciples become proclaimers: Hearts burning, seized by God they return to Jerusalem to hear the whole company of disciples now saying, "The Lord has risen."

The two add their story, how they met a stranger on the road,

then recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

So we gather this morning for the liturgy of the table

to remember and celebrate one among us whose heart burned for our mission as sisters to be the community of the great love of God in this time, in this place.

For her the race is run, the walk complete.

She took this walk with so many of us. Her words abide.