

### III Sunday of Easter > Homily ~ April 19, 2026.

Our Scripture today gives us a simple but powerful assurance: the risen Jesus is never absent. No matter where life takes us - whether in joy or confusion, in hope or disappointment - He walks with us. God is not distant. He is close to every heart that seeks Him.

In the first reading, Peter boldly proclaims that God has raised Jesus from the dead, fulfilling His promises. What seemed like defeat on the Cross has become victory. The Psalm echoes this hope: "Lord, You will show us the path of life." And in the second reading, we are reminded that our faith and hope rest in a living God who has saved us through Christ.

Then we come to the Gospel - the beautiful story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. They are discouraged, confused, and walking away from Jerusalem. Their hopes had been shattered. Yet, Jesus comes to them - quietly, gently - walking beside them, even though they do not recognize Him at first.

Isn't that often our experience? We, too, have our "Emmaus roads." Times when life does not go as planned - when prayers seem unanswered, when relationships struggle, when worries about health, finances, or family weigh us down. In those moments, we may feel alone. But today's Gospel reminds us: we are never alone. Jesus is walking with us, even when we fail to recognize Him.

And how do the disciples finally recognize Him? In the breaking of the bread. In the Eucharist, their eyes are opened. This is the same way we encounter Him today. The risen Lord is truly present - in the Eucharist, in the Word of God, and in the community gathered in His name.

That is why the Church encourages us to stay connected to Him daily: through prayer, through reading Scripture, and especially through the Eucharist. These are not just obligations - they are encounters. Each time we listen to the Word, each time we receive Holy Communion, we meet the living Christ.

The disciples said, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He spoke to us?" That is a question for us today. Do our hearts burn when we hear God's Word? Do we allow it to touch us, challenge us, and guide us?

If we open our hearts, that same fire can grow within us - a fire of faith, hope, and love. And like the disciples, once we recognize Jesus, we are called to rise and share that joy with others.

So this week, as you walk your own "Emmaus road," remember: Jesus is beside you. Speak to Him in prayer. Listen to Him in Scripture. Receive Him in the Eucharist. Moreover, let your heart be set on fire by His presence.