

Road to Emmaus: Luke 24
Wednesday of the Octave of Easter
Homily of Bishop Barres
April 3, 2024

The Easter Octave that we celebrate this week began on Easter Sunday and ends on the Second Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday.

All eight days of the Octave are celebrated as Solemnities.

The Easter Octave is an intense and focused celebration of the Risen Christ in which we feast on the biblical Resurrection appearances of Christ and give glory to the Risen Lord with the same intensity of Easter Sunday morning.

We pray the Gloria at every Mass during the Octave and we conclude the dismissal of the Mass with a double Alleluia.

The Easter Octave is a time for us to realize even more deeply that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the very foundation of our lives.

It is the foundation of our daily reality and existence.

St. Paul writes: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.” (1 Cor 15:17)

The Resurrection of Christ is the foundation of our faith and the “fulcrum” of Salvation history and of our lives on earth.

Bishop Robert Barron writes: “If Jesus did not truly rise, then his claims to be speaking and acting in the person of God would be invalidated; and if these are invalidated, then all talk of Incarnation is negated; and if Incarnation does not hold, then the dogma of the Trinity falls away. And if the Trinity collapses, all speech about the Holy Spirit is nugatory (or irrelevant). And if there is no Holy Spirit, it makes no sense to refer to the Church or to its sacraments. Finally, if Christ has not been raised, then we have no reasonable hope of personal

resurrection...90% of the Creed craters in upon itself if Resurrection faith disappears.”¹

So as believing Catholics opening ourselves at every moment to deeper and more integrated belief, we are Resurrection existentialists.

We are Resurrection realists for “if the Resurrection of Christ is the key to the meaning of all Scripture, and if Scripture is the key to the meaning of all reality, then the resurrection of Christ is the key to all reality.”²

We believe in an “Easter Realism”³ because we see reality illumined by the “resplendent glow” of the Paschal Candle, the Light of the Paschal Mystery, the Light of the Victory of the Risen Christ which conquers and illumines all darkness.⁴

The Road to Emmaus Gospel from Luke 24 shows Jesus walking with two disciples on the Road to Emmaus.

The disciples were shaking out their grief on this walk trying to figure out what the death of Jesus and the dashing of their hopes meant.

Jesus, the Risen Lord, comes to them and walks with them though they do not recognize him. He begins to explain the Scriptures to them and their hearts burn with the Scriptures and the Risen Lord’s presence.

They suddenly recognize him as he breaks the bread.

In his 2008 *Regina Caeli Address*, Pope Benedict XVI states: “Today too he breaks bread for us and gives himself as our Bread. And so the meeting with the Risen Christ that is possible even today gives us a deeper and more authentic faith tempered, so to speak, by the fire of the Paschal Event; a faith that is robust because it is nourished

¹ Bishop Robert Barron, *Light from Light: A Theological Reflection on the Nicene Creed* (Park Ridge, IL: Word on Fire Academic, 2021), 102-103.

² Khaled Anatolios, “Be Realistic, Christ is Risen!” in *Feasts for the Kingdom: Sermons for the Liturgical Year* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2023), 181.

³ See Khaled Anatolios, “Be Realistic, Christ is Risen!” *Feasts for the Kingdom: Sermons for the Liturgical Year* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2023), 179-184.

⁴ See Archbishop J. Augustine Di Noia, OP, *Grace in Season: The Riches of the Gospel in Seventy Sermons* (Providence, RI: Cluny Media, 2019), 74.

not by human ideas but by the Word of God and by his Real Presence in the Eucharist.

This marvellous Gospel text already contains the structure of Holy Mass: in the first part, listening to the Word through the Sacred Scriptures; in the second part, the Eucharistic liturgy and communion with Christ present in the Sacrament of his Body and his Blood. In nourishing herself at this two-fold table, the Church is constantly built up and renewed from day to day in faith, hope and charity. Through the intercession of Mary Most Holy, let us pray that in reliving the experience of the disciples of Emmaus every Christian and every community may rediscover the grace of the transforming encounter with the Risen Lord.”

Our Easter Octave Masses 2024 occur during the National Eucharistic Revival, a time appointed by the Bishops of the United States for all Catholics to grow in understanding and love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, really and truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Let’s allow the Eucharistic charity that flows from the Eucharistic Revival in this Easter Octave to touch the wounds of those suffering in the Middle East, Ukraine, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Haiti and all war torn and violence-ridden areas of the world.⁵

Let’s allow the Eucharistic charity that flows from the Eucharistic Revival in this Easter Octave to touch the wounds of our Church and our nation.

Let’s allow our hearts to burn resplendently with the inspired Sacred Scriptures.

Let’s allow our hearts to burn with the Paschal Mystery at the breaking of the Bread at the cosmic Easter Octave Catholic Mass we celebrate today.

Let’s allow our hearts to burn with trust in the Divine Mercy on our own roads to Emmaus.

⁵ See Pope Francis’ March 31, 2024 Easter Sunday *Urbi et Orbi* Address for his specific intentions for peace and justice in the world:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2024/3/31/urbi-et-orbi.html>

BENEDICT XVI

REGINA CÆLI

St Peter's Square
Third Sunday of Easter, 6 April 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Gospel of this Sunday - the Third of Easter - is the famous account of the disciples of Emmaus (cf. Lk 24: 13-35). It tells the tale of two followers of Christ who, on the day after the Sabbath or the third day after his death, were leaving Jerusalem sad and dejected, bound for a village that was not far off called, precisely, Emmaus. They were joined on their way by the Risen Jesus but did not recognize him. Realizing that they were downhearted, he explained, drawing on the Scriptures, that the Messiah had to suffer and die in order to enter into his glory. Then entering the house with them, he sat down to eat, blessed the bread and broke it; and at that instant they recognized him but he vanished from their sight, leaving them marvelling before that broken bread, a new sign of his presence. And they both immediately headed back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples of the event.

The locality of Emmaus has not been identified with certainty. There are various hypotheses and this one is not without an evocativeness of its own for it allows us to think that Emmaus actually represents every place: the road that leads there is the road every Christian, every person, takes. The Risen Jesus makes himself our travelling companion as we go on our way, to rekindle the warmth of faith and hope in our hearts and to break the bread of eternal life. In the disciples' conversation with the unknown wayfarer the words the evangelist Luke puts in the mouth of one of them are striking: "We had hoped..." (Lk 24: 21). This verb in the past tense tells all: we believed, we followed, we hoped..., but now everything is over. Even Jesus of Nazareth, who had shown himself in his words and actions to be a powerful prophet, has failed, and we are left disappointed. This drama of the disciples of Emmaus appears like a reflection of the situation of many Christians of our time: it seems that the hope of faith has failed. Faith itself enters a crisis because of negative experiences that make us feel abandoned and betrayed even by the Lord. But this road to Emmaus on which we walk

can become the way of a purification and maturation of our belief in God. Also today we can enter into dialogue with Jesus, listening to his Word. Today too he breaks bread for us and gives himself as our Bread. And so the meeting with the Risen Christ that is possible even today gives us a deeper and more authentic faith tempered, so to speak, by the fire of the Paschal Event; a faith that is robust because it is nourished not by human ideas but by the Word of God and by his Real Presence in the Eucharist.

This marvellous Gospel text already contains the structure of Holy Mass: in the first part, listening to the Word through the Sacred Scriptures; in the second part, the Eucharistic liturgy and communion with Christ present in the Sacrament of his Body and his Blood. In nourishing herself at this two-fold table, the Church is constantly built up and renewed from day to day in faith, hope and charity. Through the intercession of Mary Most Holy, let us pray that in reliving the experience of the disciples of Emmaus every Christian and every community may rediscover the grace of the transforming encounter with the Risen Lord.
