

MASS CHANGE-A RELECTION-FR. JIM

“Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that 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 walk along?”* They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, *“Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place in these days?”* And he replied to them, *“What sort of things?”* They said to him, *“The things that happened to Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see....”* **Luke 24:13-24**

In this passage from Luke’s Gospel that we heard during our Easter Season, the disciples have experienced the loss of Jesus. They are downcast and find themselves in unfamiliar territory. It is not so different when we experience loss and find ourselves in a similar place. Next weekend, our faith community of St. Joseph’s (along with Good Shepherd and Guardian Angels) will experience a considerable change and for many a substantial loss, when the new Mass schedule goes into effect. Although the Saturday 5:00pm and 10:30am community will feel a difference because of the influx of many new people, the 8:00am Mass community will be affected in a very significant way. Some parishioners have come to the 8:00am Mass for 50 or 60 years. It was at this Mass where there was a sense of identity and community, where people next to you in the pew or in front or back of you shared the sign of peace or some other aspect of life. There will be memories of those who greeted you or said they missed you when you were away on vacation or remembered to pray for you or your loved one during a difficult time of illness or death of a family member. So it is not just a loss of a Mass time, but a loss of relationships and certain rhythm of one’s life on Sunday.

Our faith community that celebrates Masses this weekend will be the last time that we gather in this unique way. Our assembled community will take on a different “feel.” Yet like the disciples on the road to Emmaus (as they greet and welcome a stranger and eventually break bread), we too will be able discover the Risen Lord in a new way. We also experience an aspect of our baptism with a sense of “dying” with the loss of our former Mass schedule (especially the 8:00am Mass), but we also will discover through meeting new people, the “rising” of the Lord in our “new” assembled community. It is interesting that this change of our Mass schedule happens close to the Feast of the Ascension because the disciples, like us, also were invited to discover the ascending Lord in a new way, especially in their brothers and sisters in the Christian community, including the new members, the gentile converts that would eventually become a part of the Body of Christ.

So I pray as we break bread together this weekend and move forward as pilgrims (like the disciples on the road to Emmaus) that we will see that the same Risen Lord that walked with us on our previous “road” continues to dwell with us in this new journey. I leave us with these questions to ponder:

What are the memories that I treasure from the Mass I ordinarily attended in these past years at St. Joseph’s? What will I miss as we move into our new Mass times? What do I look forward to?

What values or concerns have influenced my decision in choosing the “new” Mass time I have chosen? How will I know if parishioners have left our parish during this time of transition, and how will I reach out to them to let them know that they are always welcome here?

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