

So today, my favorite Gospel story – on the road to Emmaus. I like it so much I've chosen it as the Gospel reading for my funeral – which won't be anytime too soon, I hope. . .

The appeal of this story for me is that it talks about where we live. It's not about a high-falutin revelation, or about great saints, or about exotic places or people.

No the Emmaus story is about ordinary, everyday despair – and ordinary, Monday-morning quarter-backing.

It's about bumping into a stranger on the way to work, about sitting down at table and sharing a meal.

It's about our common lives as we go through the activities of our day, vaguely wondering where God is in all of this, wondering – does anything really matter? Will things ever get any better? What's it all about, anyway?

So we just heard the story: a couple of unknown, down in the dumps followers of Jesus trudging along a dusty road, chatting as they head back home and back to work – after spending the high holy days in Jerusalem. Their conversation is full of despair and discouragement, small talk, and disappointment: life's a burden and doesn't live up to its promises. . .

We should recognize that these disciples are not just on the road to Emmaus ---- but they are on the road of life and have just experienced one more hurt, one more let down. Where is God in all of this?

When the stranger comes along, he asks them about their conversation and they recite their woes. Their talking points are ours: the everyday stuff: the economy, the kids, the world crisis, spouses, school, the job, the boss – and so on, the pieces of our everyday lives.

Then the two add another disappointment: they simply say, "they were hoping. . ." Hoping for what?

For answers to their questions, of course – the same thing we all hope for as we move through life: Where is God? Does my life count? Does anything make any sense? Why do I have this sickness or betrayal or accident or death of a loved one? Why don't I have some sign that God is near? I could put up with anything if I just felt the presence of God, I'm sure of that. . .

The Emmaus story picks up on the lives of every man and every woman and every child. We are all on the road of life: some just beginning their journey, some in the middle, and others near the end.

Along the way we gossip, we win a few and we lose a few. We enjoy the company of family and friends, and we miss them when they are gone. We despair when our enemies seem to win.

And this is all part of the conversation on the road to Emmaus. . . The two sigh: "We were hoping for a God of justice and compassion to make sense of it all. "

And suddenly, into this routine conversation, this wondering and wandering ---- comes God: the stranger with the holes in his hands who shares the Word of God, breaks the bread --- and shares himself.

AND THAT IS THE POINT OF THE STORY: God is here with us. God breaks into our everyday lives – it's just that we don't always know it.

Just as the two going to Emmaus *eventually* recognize the risen Christ – not in some fabulous, outlandish way – but in the simple gestures of sharing a meal --- they remind us that God is here in our lives, too --- although we don't see it most of the time.

God loves us and wants to be near us; this story of Emmaus invites us to see that God's love can be found everywhere – even on a seven mile dusty road at the end of a long day.

Jesus is here with us now: "he is present in our midst when we are gathered by his love and when, as once for the disciples, so now for us, he opens the scriptures and breaks the bread."

Jesus is with us now. In all of the routine comings and goings of our life – along whatever road we are on – along whatever part of the journey of life we may be: Jesus is with us – the stranger who is no stranger: if we just invite him in---- and take the time to recognize him.

And you know what?

*Jesus loves you this I know.*

*For the Bible tells us so.*