

SUNDAY

by SUNDAY

by Joan Mitchell, CSJ

Place an open bible,
lighted candle, flower,
and small loaf of bread
at the center of your group.

LEADER: Let's take a walk in
the world.

ALL: And find where earth is
awakening.

LEADER: Let's remember what
we see. *Take turns telling where
you see spring.*

LEADER: Help us Risen One
find you in the sharing of our
lives. *Sing an alleluia you know.*

Easter is a spring event.
Spring is its own liturgy.
Earth awakens. Flowers
poke stems above ground
toward the warmth of sun.
Creation testifies to God's
sustaining presence. Creation
growing makes God visible just
as Jesus makes visible who God
is and reveals love is God's life-
giving power.

The walk to Emmaus in
Sunday's gospel becomes a
liturgy on foot for two of Jesus'
disciples. They talk about the
scriptures (liturgy of the word)
and break bread together
with a stranger (liturgy of the
eucharist).

As they tell how Jesus
took hold of their hearts and
hopes, the two get excited all
over again about who Jesus is.
Conversation with the stranger
stirs the embers of their faith

into flame. Breaking bread
together reveals the stranger is
Jesus with them.

So many times conversation
over dinner repeats the
liturgy of friendship. Talking
together stirs the embers of old
understandings and bursts new
insights into flame. The shared
meal sends us forth humming,
feeling understood and
understanding, in communion.

● **With whom have you talked and
eaten lately?**

Live Easter

Breathe deep.

Feel your heart pump.

Say thank you for life.

Help serve meals at a homeless

shelter. Read to a child. Have dinner with your closest

friend. Read to an old person. Find a tulip. Eat lunch

with others at work. Rise each day to bless God

for sunlight. Learn the name of someone you

often see but don't know. Entertain friends

you haven't seen this year. Have lunch

with someone half your age. Email

a college roommate or armed

service buddy. Call a sibling.

Go fishing. Plant a

vegetable or flower.



GOSPEL

Jesus' disciples know him in breaking bread.



NARRATOR: On the first day of the week, two disciples were going their way to a village named Emmaus seven miles distant from Jerusalem. They were talking to one another about all that had happened. As they were talking and discussing, Jesus came near and began to travel with them. But they did not recognize him.

STRANGER: What are you discussing as you walk along so sadly?

CLEOPAS: Are you a stranger in Jerusalem that you do not know the things that happened these past few days?

STRANGER: What things?

CLEOPAS: The things to do with Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet powerful in word and deed in the eyes of God and all the people; how our chief priests and leaders delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him. We were hoping that he was the one who would set Israel free.

DISCIPLE: Besides all this, today, the third day since these things happened, some women of our group astonished us. After going to the tomb before dawn and not finding his body, they came back saying they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of those with us went to the tomb and found it empty just as the women said, but him they did not see.

STRANGER: How slow of heart you are to believe all the prophets have said. Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things to enter into his glory?

NARRATOR: Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted for them every passage of scripture that referred to him. As they neared the village to which they were going, the stranger acted as if he were going farther. But they pressed him.

DISCIPLES: Stay with us, for it is nearly evening. The day is ending.

NARRATOR: So he went to stay with them. While he sat with them, he took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened and they recognized him but he vanished from their sight. They said to each other—

DISCIPLES: Were not our hearts burning inside us as he talked to us on the road and opened the scriptures to us?

NARRATOR: They got up immediately and returned to Jerusalem, where they found the eleven and the rest of the company assembled.

COMPANY: The Lord has been raised! It is true! He has appeared to Simon.

NARRATOR: Then the two recounted what had happened on the road and how they knew him in the breaking of the bread.

Luke 24.13-35

How is Jesus really present with us?

The two disciples who leave Jerusalem and head home to Emmaus in Sunday's gospel have experienced a terrible loss. As disciples, they wrapped their lives around Jesus, whom they expected would usher in the reign of God. Their hopes die at his crucifixion. The two disciples are walking away from not only the fact of Jesus' death but also from the women

disciples' reports that he has been raised up.

The disciples meet a stranger, who prompts them to recount the events of Jesus' death and resurrection and then casts these events in a new light. The conversation suggests the sharing around Jesus' words and actions that early Christians did in the house churches. The gospels develop first as oral traditions.

As disciples preach Jesus' story, Christians hear echoes of the prophet Isaiah and reimagine the prophet Daniel's vision of "one like a human being, who receives dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples should serve him (Daniel 7.13). Son of Man sayings develop that carry the Easter message.

Emmaus lies seven miles from Jerusalem, a walk long

enough for a transforming conversation. The walk represents a whole process of moving from loss to new life, from blindness to faith.

● **When have you experienced your hopes die?**

● **Who has helped rekindle your lost hopes?**

Luke draws on Second Isaiah, the prophet of Israel's exile in Babylon, to express the meaning of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. The prophet speaks in Isaiah 40-55. He writes four songs that describe the people collectively as God's suffering servant, who bears "the punishment that makes us whole, and by whose wounds we were healed" (53.5).

In their return from exile the people become a revelation of God's faithfulness. "It is too little for you to be my servants," Second Isaiah says on God's behalf, "I will make you a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (49.59-60). The people discover God remembers them, can act in this foreign land, and acts through the foreign leader, Cyrus of Persia, to return them home.

These are passages that suggest the messiah had to suffer death to enter his glory, but on Monday after Jesus' resurrection the two disciples don't have this insight yet. During 50 years of telling Jesus' story orally, the early Christian communities develop these insights that the written gospels proclaim.

"Stay with us, for it is nearly evening."

When Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James find Jesus' tomb empty, two men in dazzling clothes say, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here. He has risen. Remember how he told you, while 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" (24.6-7). Then the women remember.

"Didn't the messiah have to suffer to enter into his glory?" The stranger asks and answers, opening the scriptures and rekindling the disciples' hopes.

● **When have your expectations blinded you to the presence of God at work in your life?**



● **With what contradictions do you wrestle in reflecting on Jesus' death and resurrection?**

In the Emmaus story the risen Jesus becomes present to the two disciples first through interpreting the scriptures together and then through breaking bread, the same ways Jesus becomes present in every Eucharist. In extending hospitality to the stranger, the disciples welcome a guest for supper who turns out to be their host at the last supper and whom the reader recognizes as the host of every Eucharist.

Their hospitality toward a stranger rewards the two disciples, but as soon as they recognize Jesus, he vanishes. Their recognition is the seeing of faith. They begin to piece together a new vision.

They remember how their hearts burned within them as the stranger explained the scriptures and revived their hopes. And they met Jesus in the breaking of the bread because they wanted to hear more and invited him to dinner, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening."

● **What role is most transforming in your experience—guest or host?**

● **Who do you urge to stay in your life?**

● **What makes your heart burn with hope in all the human race can become?**

Death can't hold Jesus.

Sunday's first reading comes from the sermon Peter gives on Pentecost. This sermon proclaims the same core message as Sunday's gospel does: God has raised up Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. We hear the Christian creed forming in these passages.

The Easter event calls forth the Pentecost experience, in which people from many parts of the world receive the Spirit of Christ. The authentic Christian church must be as catholic—as diverse, whole, and universal—as the love Jesus Christ reveals through his life and teaching and through his sending of the Holy Spirit.

When we gather to remember Jesus' death and resurrection and break bread as he asked, we celebrate and nourish our commitment to Jesus' universal mission. Each Eucharist challenges us to embrace the world as the love of Christ embraces the world.

Peter begins preaching.

On the day of Pentecost Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice, and addressed them: "You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem! Listen to what I have to say:

"People of Israel, listen to me! Jesus the Nazorean was a man whom God sent to you with miracles, wonders, and signs as his credentials. These God worked through him in your midst, as you well know. He was delivered up by the set purpose

and plan of God; you even used pagans to crucify and kill him. God freed him from death's bitter pangs, however, and raised him up again, for it was impossible that death should keep its hold on him.

"David says of him:
'I have set the Lord before me;
with God at my right hand
I shall not be disturbed.
My heart has been glad
and my tongue rejoiced,
my body will live on in hope.
For you will not abandon
my soul to the nether world,
nor will you suffer your faithful one
to undergo corruption.
You have shown me the paths of
life; you will fill me with joy in your
presence.'

"Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God has sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, 'He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.'

"This Jesus God raised up, and of that, all of us are witnesses. Being, therefore, exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear."

Acts 2.14,22-33

- How is the Spirit of God working through the Body of Christ in your midst?
- What challenges to be more catholic in your faith are you experiencing?

PRAY

LEADER: It is through Jesus Christ we are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory.

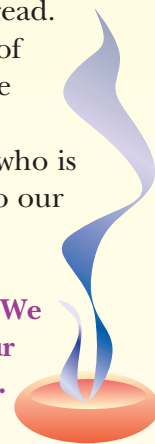
ALL: Stay with us, Lord.

LEADER: We have broken the bread of Jesus' word and nourished each other with our reflection.

ALL: Our hearts burn within us.

LEADER: Let us break and share this loaf of bread. As we share pieces of the loaf, let us make a commitment to welcome someone who is a stranger to us into our lives.

ALL: We hear your word, Risen Lord. We are your body in our world. Easter in us. Amen. Alleluia.

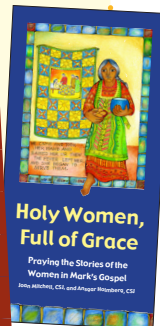
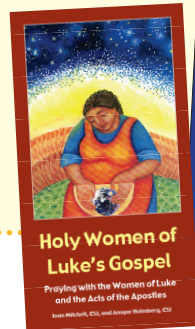


Joan Mitchell, CSJ, the editor of SUNDAY BY SUNDAY, holds a Masters of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School and a Ph.D. in New Testament from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN.

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