

The Journey to Emmaus

Two disciples of Jesus were walking to Emmaus on the first Easter Day when a stranger came up, walked along with them and asked why they were so sad. They told Him of the Crucifixion of Jesus, to whom they had looked for the Redemption of Israel.

The Stranger then said, "O foolish and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Did not the Christ have to suffer these things before entering His glory?" And He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things referring to Himself (for it was Jesus).

As they drew near the village, they urged Him to eat with them. And He went in, reclined at the table with them, took bread, blessed it and broke it and handed it to them. And they recognized Him in the breaking of the bread. Then Jesus vanished. And they said to one another, "Was not our heart burning within us while He was speaking along the way and explaining the Scriptures."

Suffering is part of every Christian's life. For our beloved departed it has been a way to enter into glory, as it was for Christ. Now their hearts are burning with love as they await the day they will welcome us with joy.

I saw a new Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God, beautiful as a bride prepared to meet her husband.

I heard a loud voice from the throne cry out: "This is God's dwelling among His people. He shall dwell with them and they shall be His people and He shall be their God Who is always with them. He shall wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the former world has passed away."

The One who sat on the throne said to me, "See, I make all things new."

Rev. 21:2-5

A Word of Consolation

If a tiny baby could think, it would be afraid of birth. To leave the only world it has known would seem a kind of death. But immediately after birth the child would find itself in loving arms, showered with affection and cared for at every moment. Surely the baby would say, "I was foolish to doubt God's Plan for me. This is a beautiful life."

For the Christian, passing through death is really a birth into a new and better world. Those who are left behind should not grieve as if there were no hope. Life is changed, not taken away. Our dear ones live on, in a world beautiful beyond anything we can imagine. With Jesus and Mary they await the day when they will welcome us with joy.

"Do not grieve too much," they say to us. "We are living and are still with you."

For those who have been faithful, O Lord, life is not ended, but merely changed; and when this earthly abode dissolves, an eternal dwelling place awaits them in heaven.

Preface, Mass for Christian Burial
From the Roman Sacramentary

Comfort For Those Who Mourn

So many people imagine that death cruelly separates us from our loved ones. Even pious people are led to believe this great and sad mistake. When our loved ones die, they do not leave us. They remain. They do not go to some dark and distant place. They simply begin their eternity. We do not see them because we are still in the darkness of the world. But their spiritual eyes, filled with the light of heaven, are always watching us as they wait for the day when we shall share their perfect joy. We are born for heaven and one by one we end this life of tears to begin our life in endless happiness.

I have often reflected upon this beautiful truth and found it the greatest and surest comfort in time of mourning. A firm faith in the real and continual presence of our loved ones has brought the conviction and consolation that death has not destroyed them, nor carried them away. Rather it has given them life! A life with power to know fully and to love perfectly. With this new life and new power our loved ones are always present to us, knowing and loving us more than ever before.

The tears that dampen our eyes in times of mourning are tears of homesickness, tears of longing for our loved ones. But it is we who are away from home, not they. Death has been for them a doorway to an eternal home. And only because this heavenly home is invisible to our worldly eyes, we cannot see them so near us. Yet, they are with us, lovingly and tenderly waiting for the day when we, too, will enter the doorway of our eternal home. No, death is not a separation. It is a preparation for eternal union with those we love, in the peace and joy of heaven.