

Homily for First Holy Communion

(Today is also the Feast of the Ascension but I substituted the gospel of the day for the one about the Emmaus disciples)

One Day Napoleon was asked by one of his generals 'what was the happiest day of His life'. He wondered if it would be his early triumph over the Italian Army or as a young general of 26 wresting Lombardy from the Austrians. The Emperor looked thoughtful. Ah, he said," the happiest day of my life was the day of my first communion". I was near to God then.

You will notice from the Scriptures that a lot of the sightings of the risen Jesus occurred in the context of a shared meal. There is a clear reference to the Eucharist here. A few Sunday's ago Jesus said to doubting Thomas: "happy are those who have not seen and yet believe". Well, at Mass we don't see Jesus in the flesh but we believe that He is present with us under the appearance of Bread and wine and he speaks to us through the scriptures.

You often hear people say: "I believe in God but I don't believe in the Church". Well, without the Church there is no Mass. It is primarily through the Mass that we come close to our Lord. Why keep Him at a distance if he wants to be our friend? If we neglect the Mass our closeness to the Risen Lord cannot be taken for granted.

To the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus explained the scriptures. That surely refers to the first part of the Mass when we spend time listening to God's word. They said: "did not our hearts burn within us when he talked to us". Do we ever feel the Lord is speaking to us personally through the readings or homily?

The Emmaus disciples recognise Jesus at 'the breaking of bread'. That was the ancient name for the Mass.

The body of Jesus was broken on the cross out of love for us. As bread is broken in the Mass, our mission in this world is that our lives will be broken in love for others particularly those whom we're sent to serve. Recognising Jesus in the breaking of bread should also lead us to

recognise him in the brokenness of peoples' lives and respond to their needs, whatever they may be.

Initially, the two Emmaus disciples are downcast but through their encounter with the Risen Lord their faith is restored. The First Communion children now proclaim their faith in Jesus by renewing their baptismal promises.