



Silver Circle Mass

April 26, 2009

I don't usually offer titles for my homilies, but today I would like to offer one. That title would be "It could happen to you." The title is not original. It comes from a 1996 movie starring Nicholas Cage. Let me tell you a little bit about that movie.

Cage plays the part of Charley, a New York cop. One evening, Charley stops by a diner for a cup of coffee. He has only enough money for coffee and nothing for a tip. He tells the struggling waitress, Yvonne, that he has bought a lottery ticket and if he wins he will give her half. Yvonne's feet hurt, life has not been especially kind, and she's tired. The likelihood of winning and then sharing must have seemed far fetched. But as Hollywood stories go – he does win – and he does share it with her. Then comes the challenging part: What to do next. The movie continues with all the twists that sudden wealth can bring.

Now I would like to tell you another story. There were two disciples of Jesus who had been in Jerusalem with Him at the time of his Crucifixion. After the Crucifixion they decided to leave Jerusalem and go to a little village called Emmaus. I can imagine that they were emotionally exhausted. The trial, the Crucifixion, Jesus' death, the city of Jerusalem packed because of Passover week. More than likely, they just wanted to get away.

Just imagine the confusion and the disappointment that they must have felt. They had committed their lives to follow someone who was supposed to be a "prophet powerful, in word and deed." He was supposed to redeem the nation of Israel. Their lives had been tied to Him and to this dream. They must have been struggling with tremendous feelings of loss.

A stranger joins them as they are walking, and they begin to talk about their disappointment. They even talk about the women who went to the tomb and received the message that Jesus was alive. But it only added to their confusion -- no one had seen him.

Jesus begins to talk to them about what the scriptures say. They listen. They don't recognize him but he is obviously connecting with them and they urge him to stay the night with them. Then as they were getting ready to eat, He took the bread, broke it, and blessed it.

In that instance, they recognized him. **It had happened to them!** They saw the risen Lord. They had the proof.

The story continues in our lesson today. They return to Jerusalem, where the other disciples are gathered. They start to tell their story. **And it happens again!** Jesus appears to them and to the other disciples.

At first they are terrified. Isn't that the way it happens sometimes? When we get what we wish for, we don't know what to do with it. But Jesus calms them. He asks for food and they give him a piece of fish. He eats it. He has reassured them that he is no ghost!

Now let's think about one more story. **What do you need to happen to you?** We've had a beautiful weekend. I hope that you have had a chance to get outside and enjoy it. Imagine that you and I are good friends, taking a walk on this beautiful weekend. It cannot be by the sea, which is my favorite, but that is OK. I am getting used to the lake! What would we be talking about? What have you been thinking about?

- I am sure that some of us would be praising the beautiful day that God has given us.
- I suspect that some are ready to celebrate graduations and other milestones of children and grandchildren.
- I was with a good priest friend near Scranton yesterday for a few hours.
- I suspect though, that there are others, who will want to talk about losses.
- Maybe it's a job.
- Maybe it's the loss of good health.
- Maybe it's the loss of retirement funds.
- The Detroit Province lost two Jesuits who died in recent days, both taught me in theology.

I don't know precisely what we might talk about, but I do know that we would want Jesus to be walking with us.

Today is the Silver Circle celebration at John Carroll. We will be celebrating the contributions and commitment of past recipients and new inductees to the Silver Circle. During our social time, I look forward to hearing many stories about life on the Carroll Campus. From previous years, I know there have been those special people, times, and moments that you will always remember – that stand out for you. **While you may not say that you saw Jesus, I expect that you can say there were times that you were inspired. Those happenings were probably not planned -- they just happened.**

In just a few minutes, we will continue now with the celebration of the Eucharist. You have probably done this hundreds of times before. This time, I ask you to remember that Jesus made himself known to his disciples over the simple act of breaking bread and eating with them. **I pray, today, that it will happen to you** as you come seeking answers to the difficulties of life, or wanting to celebrate the good things.

May you walk away today with the assurance that Jesus is with you.

Amen