

HOMILY ON 3RD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

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Our Scripture lessons for today have one common, encouraging theme: No matter what happens in our lives, the risen Jesus is always with us. Even when we are feeling isolated during this lockdown time our Lord is always with us. He is walking with us always and everywhere. The first reading speaks Peter's first public proclamation about Jesus and how God raised Jesus from death, thus fulfilling the Messianic prophecies about the promised descendant of David. In the second reading, Peter exhorts the early Christians to place their Faith and Hope in God. The Gospel is about the story of how on Easter Sunday two disciples of Jesus, discouraged and devastated, set out on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus -- a distance of about seven miles -- and were met by a Stranger going along the same road. Most probably, Cleopas and his companion were those two people. They left Jerusalem and the company of the disciples because they had received news that the tomb was empty. His coming to them and walking alongside of them illustrates the truth that the road to Emmaus is a road of companionship with Jesus Who desires to walk with each of us. *"I am with you always"* (Matthew 28:20). The Old Testament describes how the Chosen People encountered God in unexpected ways. Gen 18:1-15 describes how Abraham, at *Mamre*, entertained angels unaware. Running from his troubles, Jacob laid his head on a stone while he slept and saw a stairway to Heaven. The Jewish custom required that Cleopas and his companion invite Jesus

to dinner. Hence, they invited Jesus for a night's rest in their house-- and Jesus accepted the invitation. The incident further illustrates that Jesus is with us even when we do not recognize him. Who knows how many times the risen Lord has passed you and me by and we did not recognise him or experience his transforming grace all because of our fear or strangers? The Emmaus incident described in today's Gospel is the story of a God who will not leave us alone when we are hurt and disappointed. We, too, have hopes and dreams about better health, healing, financial security and better family relationships. These often get shattered. The story promises us, however, that Jesus will come to us in unfamiliar guises to support and strengthen us when we least expect the risen Lord. When you encounter any crisis, failure, or any "standstill" moment, perhaps the Lord wants you to do just that--to stand still, and really listen. "Stay with us, Lord." This is a beautiful prayer which we, who are on the way, must continue to humbly pray. Whatever we have gone through, whatever we are going through and whatever we will still go through, we are confident because the Lord is with us, and the Lord will stay with us. The Way Himself will stay with us on the way, all the way! Amen.