

Let us pray: Almighty God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, that we may be wholly dedicated to you; and then use us as you will, always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Well, good morning and welcome to day number 15 of the Great 50 Days of Easter, a time of continuous celebration in our church year. Normally we would gather together and celebrate Holy Eucharist, share Communion and break bread together. But during this extraordinary time of coronavirus, we are called to be together in an “apart” kind of way, so we commune as we are able: through sacred music, Holy Scripture, Common Prayer and intercessions for all of God’s creation.

I don’t know about you, but this extraordinary time has made me notice things in a different way. When I go outside, it is with intentionality, and things look different! I’m in very urban, densely populated Somerville, but I am the solitary person on my sidewalk. The newly green trees and spring flowers just pop out - beautiful. My street is quiet, and it looks so much wider without traffic. I notice that we have more wildlife: cottontail rabbits have moved in, robins are staked out in the grass, heads cocked, listening for worms. There’s shredded fur and animal spoor in our backyard - somebody’s hunting. People in stores and on the streets, in their colorful masks, are both diffident, giving space, and hungry for human contact. Yesterday our local email group announced the 80th birthday of a friend down the street, so 20 of us gathered, with social distance, around her house to sing happy birthday. Her smile was dazzling! And she inspired a sense of community. So, I’m noticing life around me in a new way, paying more attention, my eyes more open to the miracles of life...

....as our risen Lord Christ calls us to during this Easter season. Over and over again in Scripture he calls his followers to open their eyes and recognize the presence of God all around them. In this morning’s Gospel we have a wonderful narrative in Luke, about a stranger joining two disciples as they walk the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus, discouraged and despairing after the tragic events of Jesus’ execution. This stranger turns out to be none other than the risen Lord himself. He walked and talked with them; he came home with them, had a meal, and broke bread with them. And in these simple acts some important and profound things happened: First, he “opened their eyes”, awakened their hearts and converted them with the sudden new conviction that the world was totally different from the way they had seen it only a few hours before. Far from being conquered by death and destruction and injustice, the world was alive, shimmeringly alive, with the presence of the living God. They knew it as they recalled to one another how their hearts burned within them, how they recognized their Lord. They were awakened, set on fire, and transformed by this encounter.

Secondly, Our Lord moved them into action. They didn’t just sit around marveling about encountering Jesus on the road, but they rushed back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples what they had experienced. And there they found out that it had happened to others as well. Jesus had appeared to the women at the tomb and to Peter, and was somehow, miraculously, alive and

present in the world. They weren't crazy - others had seen the Lord too, and had also been transformed, as they were.

For, finally, Jesus' appearance to them gave them a new and deep understanding of the meaning of their lives and mission in this world. The events of the previous few days turned out to be not merely a tragic end to a good and holy person's life, but the beginning of a profoundly new relationship with the now-risen Christ. Who would have guessed at the time that the mystery of the cross and empty tomb would be solved and find its meaning at Emmaus and the other places Jesus appeared to the disciples? Who would have guessed that Jesus would appear and continue to appear in countless places and times since then, to countless people whose eyes have been opened and their hearts set on fire with the knowledge that the world is alive, shimmeringly alive with God's presence and love, and that this life is eternal? Who would have guessed that God, through Jesus, had completely overcome death and opened to us the way of everlasting life?

Well, those disciples wouldn't have guessed, and neither would we! But from the time the risen Christ began appearing to them, as on the road to Emmaus, they knew that their mission was to share this new reality, this very Good News, first with one another, and then beginning at Pentecost, with the whole world.

The road to Emmaus two thousand years ago is also our road today, as Christians, as followers of that same risen Christ. Jesus journeys with each and every one of us, whether we are aware of it or not. And he would like nothing better than to have what happened to those disciples at Emmaus also happen to us here and now: that is to have our eyes opened and our hearts awakened, set on fire and transformed by love, in our lives and relationships, and throughout creation. We are called to walk daily with God, to become aware of God's abiding presence with us, walking the road with us, no matter where we are or what we are experiencing.

Then we're called to make God's love and the Good News of eternal life known throughout the world, and we're called to work for a just and compassionate world for all people and beings.

Today's Gospel also reminds us that we have many helpful aids and signposts along our journey with Christ, the same experiences he had with his friends on the road to Emmaus. We have one another in fellowship as we journey this road of life. We have the word of God through Holy Scripture, reminding us of where we come from, where we are and where we are going. And we have, in more usual times, the sacrament of the breaking of bread, the holy meal we share together, a solid, concrete, nourishing reminder of God's presence in our very bodies. This will happen again soon!

Through these signs of God's continuing presence with us we get the refreshment, the joy, the encouragement and the zest we need to continue on this transformative journey, this journey of making God's life and love known in the world. AMEN.