**Homily for April 23, 2023 Luke 24:13-35 “The Good Kind of Heartburn”**

Now on that same day two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Around a hundred years ago, the great Spanish poet Antonio Cipriano José María y Francisco de Santa Ana Machado y Ruiz was making quite a career for himself, which is neither here nor there except that his most famous quote intersects one of our most famous resurrection stories. His quote is this: *Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar.* In English, this works out to Traveler, there is no road; roads are made by walking. And it popped right into my mind as this lovely recounting of the travelers to Emmaus came round again, and we get to listen in on their painful emotional wandering, searching for the road forward now that their Jesus has been killed. Like humans through all of history, they are seeking a pre-existent path, the sure route out of their grief and confusion, and like all people, they have to eventually come to grips with the truth Machado knew so well, that there is no such path; the path is made in the walking of it. Such a perfect truth to be given us on this native American Ministries Sunday, a truth common not only to Spanish poets but to indigenous peoples everywhere. Spirit quests, pilgrimages, scouting parties, all share the commonality of paths that are bushwacked, not pre-made. Traveler, there is no road; roads are made by walking.

So, as the story unfolds, they are on the way home, home to Emmaus, a little town on the outskirts of Jerusalem. It’s about the same distance as walking from here to Durham, except they wouldn’t have those pretty trees all down the Midway. And as they are shuffling along, sweating and dusty, a traveler joins alongside; nothing odd there, except that the traveler is none other than the resurrected Jesus. Like all great teachers, he asks them open-ended questions; he draws them into sharing, and they disclose quite a lot, it just comes pouring out of them. I have been in that situation, and so have you: in that place of pain and swirling mind where a perfect stranger can ask the right question and suddenly it is hours later and you have shared way more than you planned. Part of the grief road, it seems. And in that situation, something approaching full disclosure is possible; that level of honesty and intimacy that can change lives.

Jesus seems quite a fair and balanced kind of fellow in this story; they poured out their hearts, and now he returns the favor and opens their minds to all sorts of scriptural knowledge about the one they so recently have loved and lost. They still don’t know it is him, but they are thrilled, nonetheless; so happy to have met this *caminante*, this wise and compassionate one who walks with them all the way home. It is late in the day now; meandering seven miles by foot over uneven terrain takes time. But they want *more* time, more sharing, and so they invite the stranger to stay the night. Nothing eyebrow-raising here; rule of the desert, right, hospitality before all. And it is there, in their humble home, that Jesus will finally make *his* full disclosure, and cross over from being *caminante* to *companion,* cross over from being a fellow walker to one who shares bread. It is there, in that ritual of the meal, that they really, really, *really* know him, perceive him afresh. And like is nearly always the case with us humans, our insight is but a flash, and then, somehow, he is just gone. He is known to them around the table, in the breaking of the bread, and being known is the most intimate of Biblical categories of relationship. He has fully disclosed, and they have fully understood. How rare that is, and how precious!

This kind of connection is valued across cultures and time itself, all over the world. The original inhabitants of our area, the Mechoopda, call their deity *Kodoyampeh,* which translates as Earth Maker. In their creation stories, Kodoyampeh traveled by raft to the original site of their village along what is now called Little Chico Creek. But he didn’t travel alone; Turtle came along for companionship and wisdom sharing. They were soon enough joined by yet another when a rope of feathers fell from above, and who should come for an extended visit than Earth-Initiate, whose body glowed bright as the sun, and the one who would create the human race alongside Kodoyampeh and Turtle…sound familiar? In our book of Genesis, God declares that it is not good for people to be alone, and creates togetherness as part of the natural order. On this side of the globe, our Mechoopda and Maidu friends were understanding these same universal principles!

Here's how it seems to me after six decades plus a little more: we travel the road through life, sometimes on task but sometimes straying, and still managing to wander again and again into the presence of God, seeking to have what all ancient peoples discovered, the value of connection with God and with others. In the Emmaus story, the first thing they do is try to lock their experience into time and place: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” This, surely, is the good kind of heartburn, the excitement of bonds forged, and relationships established. And the next step, once one is so very energized and connected, is to share that energy, because it is too much for any individual to hold within themselves. It is night now in Emmaus, and the uneven terrain between their snug home and the big city of Jerusalem is shadowed and risky, but they don’t care. Back up the Midway they go, to find the apostles and share the truth that cannot be suppressed. This is their ‘Go Tell It on The Mountain’ moment. *Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar.*  Traveler, there is no road; roads are made by walking. My prayer for us all is that we keep walking, keep searching, keep blazing new trails with Jesus and with one another as both *caminantes* and *companions.* Amen.