

In the name of ✝ Jesus.

“Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide” is probably not on anyone’s top ten list of Easter hymns. And yet, its strong textual basis is this resurrection day appearance of Jesus to these two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Jesus’ appearance to these two unnamed disciples doesn’t make St. Paul’s list of “first importance” people that see Jesus, either. He names Cephas and the twelve, James and all the apostles, 500 of the brethren all at once, and then himself “as to one untimely born” (1 Cor. 15:5-8), but he misses a few: Mary Magdalene, for example; the other women who went to the tomb and were told to report back to the disciples that “Jesus has risen, as he told you”; and these two disciples. But these two are significant enough for Luke’s orderly account (Luke 1:3), and His appearance to them teaches.

This is the way it happened. These two disciples were trudging from Jerusalem toward Emmaus. Their steps were probably as heavy as their hearts. Their shoulders likely drooping with grief. Their voices likely still quivering with grief as they discussed the recent events.

A man came up to them; they didn’t recognize Him. He must have kept them from seeing His wounded hands and feet. “What had happened?” he asked. The two were surprised, but they summoned up the strength to recount the grisly details. “Our teacher, a prophet, the One we thought was the Christ, our redeemer and deliverer, has been killed. Our own chief priests condemned Him; the governor Pilate carried out the sentence. Some of our fellow disciples took Him down from His gallows and laid Him in a tomb. But, He died! Oh, He died, and now some His followers are scattering.”

“There were some of the women of our company who did report that the tomb was now empty and that they had seen a vision of angels telling them that He was alive, but they didn’t have any proof. Perhaps, they were just overly grief stricken.”

The stranger scolded them a bit. “*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!*” And He proceeded to instruct them from the Scriptures. “Isn’t this what Moses had foretold; and David, and the Prophets? Isn’t this what Jesus Himself had been teaching you?”

It was getting late as they were approaching Emmaus. “Stay with us,” they urged the stranger. He did and broke bread with them, and then they recognized Him. This was no stranger; this was Jesus. He IS alive. The women WERE right. Jesus IS risen from the dead! They went and reported to the eleven

But here's the point: how did they recognize Him? Surely their hearts burned within them as He was expounding the Scriptures to them. But it took more, and thanks be to God, He is not stingy with His grace. He gives us His word of Gospel, "Christ who was crucified is not here; He is risen!"—just as the prophets, foretold, just as Jesus told us. But more than that, He gives us the Sacraments! In Holy Baptism, we are united with the crucified and risen Christ, and in the Supper, Jesus is made known to us as He was made "*known to them in the breaking of the bread.*"

That's why we're gathering here today. For it's more than what the vice president is reported to have said. It's not just "where two or more are gathered" (David Brody, CBNNews.com, 4/10/2020), but where they are "*gathered in My name*" (Matt. 18:20). It's more than what the governor said about two or three gathering together in an abstract way. It's gathering to have our hearts burn with Jesus' word and to break bread in His supper. That's how He promises to abide with us. As I read someone said recently to those who think that online church is a good substitute for gathering together: "You can't feed your child by showing him a picture of a steak and potatoes." Our online presence is a help, but it's no substitute for the real thing. We're here to partake of the real thing, that the risen Christ may truly be made known to us.

So, in the words of the hymn, we pray, "In these last days of great distress Grant us, dear Lord, true steadfastness, that we keep pure till life is spent, Your holy Word and Sacrament."

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Christ is risen! Alleluia!