

HOMILY 3RD Sunday of Easter **Sunday, April 19, 2026**

All the time,
all the wasted time,
All the years waiting for a sign.
To think I had it all,
all the time.

Have you ever had a situation where you were looking for a big sign telling you what to do next, and the answer was there all the time and you just did not see it? Sometimes we have tunnel vision. We know what we want to happen; we know the most logical next step, so we cannot see anything else. And sometimes we just need to stay the course.

In the Gospel reading, we encounter Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus. We know nothing about Cleopas other than his name and we do not know anything about his companion. We know nothing about Emmaus, even its exact location, other than it was 7 miles from Jerusalem. Jesus did not just appear to his mother and his apostles, the people closest to him; he also appeared to ordinary people on their way to an unknown place. This reminds us that Jesus is with each one of us all of the time because he loves us. We do not have to be at church or in a special place to encounter Jesus. We may expect to encounter Jesus at Church or during prayer. We are more likely to encounter him when we expect to, but he is with us always. Cleopas and his companion do not recognize Jesus when he comes to them at first. They start to recognize him when they think he is going to leave them and they reach out to him and invite Jesus to stay with them. They ultimately recognize him in the breaking of the bread, but Jesus was already with them for a long time. Jesus is always with us but we are frequently not aware of his presence in our lives until we look for him.

Cleopas and his companion also told Jesus that they were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel. In spite of the fact that Jesus told them multiple times that his kingdom was not of this world, they expected that it was. That is what they expected and wanted. They did not expect Jesus to suffer and die on the cross and be raised in 3 days, even though Jesus told them that this was going to happen. They did not like the suffering part so they just ignored that.

We need to be searching for what God is calling us to do because he has a plan and that plan is better than ours. We frequently think that Jesus should just do what we tell him to do. We also think that if we do all of the right things that we will have an easy and care free life. I think we will have that in heaven, but we are not in heaven yet. That is just not what life in this world is all about. Sometimes life is difficult and we need to work through the difficulties and learn lessons. God will bring goodness out of suffering if we let him.

People frequently ask me, “Why doesn’t Jesus just intervene and make people do the right thing?” God created us in his own image and likeness and this includes our free will. He allows us to exercise it. If we did not have free will, we would not be human. Jesus wants us to love him and love one another. In order to love the way that God loves us, we have to be free not to love. If we did not have free will, we would be like an apple tree that gives us shade and healthy fruit. The apple tree is good to us, but it is just what apple trees do. An apple tree does not love us.

Life in this world is not easy but the Kingdom of God is not of this world. We need to accept the things that happen in this world that are not within our control. We need to trust that Jesus is with us and guiding us all of the time. We need to have some quiet time in prayer to discern what God is calling us to do. We need to be aware of all the things and people who are offered to us and consider if this is the answer from God that we are looking for. It may not come as a huge sign. It may be quietly presenting itself in a way that we do not expect. I am asking that you do this with the restructuring of the Archdiocese of Detroit. We have a process that is open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and all of us will have input into the process. If people are telling you that all the decisions have already been made, that is simply not true. Participate in the process. Trust the process. Jesus is walking with us, look for him. If we can do that, the Church is the Archdiocese of Detroit will thrive, our priests will flourish and we will be able to continue the ministry of Jesus Christ.