



Homily –3rd Sunday of Easter 2011 (A)ⁱ

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*Endow Gala
Holy Ghost Church
Denver, Colorado
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My dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

It is so good to be back in Denver and to celebrate this Holy Eucharist with you.

We are here this evening to give thanks to God and to ask his continued graces for Endow and its work.

Your work, my sisters, is so important for the new evangelization. You are building a culture of life and the family of God. You are bringing to our culture a beautiful vision of true “feminism” — a beautiful vision of the woman’s place at the heart of God’s loving plan for our salvation.

In this Easter season, we are reminded again that in God’s plan he granted women the privilege of being the first witnesses of the resurrection.

We hear that in the Gospel this evening.

The disciples say: “Some *women of our company* amazed us....They came back saying they had even seen a vision of angels, *who said that he was alive!*”

The Gospels all tell us: Women were the first to see the empty tomb and hear the announcement of the angels.

And the women disciples were the first to go and proclaim that Christ is risen. Women first evangelized the apostles!

This is still your beautiful vocation, my sisters. This is Endow’s great mission. To empower women to bear witness to the resurrection before the people of our world today.

Our readings this evening, for this vigil for the third Sunday of Easter, are meant to strengthen us and give us hope in our mission of joy.

The Gospel presents us with Jesus' appearance to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. It is a beautiful scene that we know well.

Notice that the disciples today don't know they are walking and talking with Jesus. The Gospel tells us: "Their eyes were kept from recognizing him."

To know the risen Christ, to realize he is present in our lives, we need a whole new way of seeing. We need the eyes of our hearts to be enlightened.ⁱⁱ

That is what happens to the disciples during the course of this beautiful Gospel. Through his Word and Sacrament, Jesus Christ enlightens them. He grants them a new perception, a kind of "inner vision." An awareness not based on outward appearances.

My brothers and sisters, this wonderful Gospel follows the pattern and structure of the Holy Mass.

It is beautiful and subtle. It is also not a coincidence.

The disciples' encounter with Christ begins with their hearing the Word of God.

Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus explains the Scriptures to them. He interprets the Old Testament for them in light of the New. In light of his cross and resurrection.

His interpretation of the Scriptures causes their hearts to burn with the desire for conversion, with the desire for communion. So the disciples make a kind of confession of faith. They urge him, *Stay with us!*

Then what happens? Jesus, seated at the *table*, *takes* the bread, *blesses* and *breaks* it, and *gives* it to them.

This language, again, is not an accident. When we read the accounts of the Last Supper and the institution of the Holy Eucharist we find the same words in the same order — "As they were *at table*...he *took bread, blessed* and *broke it* and *gave it to them*."ⁱⁱⁱ

And *in the breaking of the bread*, the Gospel tells us this evening, the disciples' eyes are opened and they recognize him. Then Jesus vanishes out of their sight.

My brothers and sisters, the beautiful story of Emmaus is the story of our discipleship. It is the story of our relationship with the risen Lord. We are those disciples. The risen Lord now draws near to each one of us as we travel along the road of our life.

We are *sojourners* in this world, St. Peter tells us in the second reading. We walk not by sight, but by faith in the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

My dear sisters in Endow, these readings this evening speak especially to you in your discipleship in the world.

Jesus wants to walk with us every day of our lives — just as he did with those disciples on that first Easter afternoon. He wants to walk with you and talk with you, though you cannot see him.

As he questions his disciples today, he questions all of us also. He asks us why we are so slow of heart to believe. He asks us what more we need to make a decision for his Gospel — to give our lives completely to the love of God and the love of our neighbor.

My brothers and sisters, we must increase your conscious awareness of the presence of God in our lives. He is with us now always — in good times and bad, in your achievements and in your failures. Without seeing him, we must believe in him more and love him more.^{iv}

My brothers and sisters, you must let Jesus Christ show you the pathways of life, as we sing in the Psalm today.

And we must all let Jesus Christ teach us from his Word, from the Sacred Scriptures.

As he does with the disciples in the Gospel today, Jesus wants to teach us to interpret the events in our lives in light of his death and resurrection, in light of the promises of God's Word.

Let's renew our resolution to spend time in prayer each day talking to Jesus. Telling him what's on our hearts. Telling him what we hope for, and what disappoints us.

We need to ask him to deepen his relationship with us, to give us the grace we need to be holy. We need to ask him, as the disciples did, *Stay with us!* Abide with us! Bring us to communion with the living God!

But prayer, my sisters and brothers, is always talking *and* listening. We have to be better listeners — more disciplined, more prayerful.

We need to make time each day to contemplate the life of Christ through our prayerful reading and mediation on the Gospels.

Through our continual reflection on the words and actions of Jesus in the Gospels we will have deeper assurance of his company. We will find ourselves walking more closely united with him.

Our reflection on his Word always leads us to fellowship with him at his table, at his holy altar. We also know Jesus Christ “in the breaking of the bread,” which is what the Eucharist was called in the earliest days of the Church.^v

And like those first disciples, we are called to share the joy we have experienced with others.

We also must set out from the Eucharistic table to proclaim his death and resurrection to the men and women of our time.

Let us bear witness to the risen Lord who is revealed to us in the breaking of the bread!

Let us seek to open people's eyes and set their hearts on fire with the truth of his words and the power of his love.

Let us do this with great joy and enthusiasm. Let us go with bold confidence! Because as we hear in today's first reading, the pangs of death could not hold him!

Dear sisters of Endow, it is my special prayer for you that in this "breaking of the bread" this evening you may renew your faith and dedication to our risen Lord.

Always look to the example of the heroic women of the resurrection.

Women were the first to see him risen from the dead. And remember also that in God's plan, it was through a woman that our Lord entered this world for our salvation.

Make Mary your model in everything, my sisters! She is the perfect example of self-giving love. And she is the model of perfect union with Christ.

On this eve of Mother's Day, let us ask the Mother of Christ, and our mother, to obtain for us these same graces of holiness and union with Christ!

ⁱ Readings: Acts 2:14, 22–33; Ps. 16:1–2, 5, 7–11; 1 Pet. 1:17–21; Luke 24:13–35

ⁱⁱ Eph. 1:18.

ⁱⁱⁱ Mark 14:17, 22; Matt. 26:20, 26; Luke 22:14, 19.

^{iv} 2 Cor. 5:7; John 20:29.

^v Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7.