

Homily, 30 April 2017  
Third Sunday of Easter

*Acts 2:14,22-33; Psalm 16:1-2,57-8,9-10,11; 1 Peter 1:17-21; Luke 24:13-35*



*Were not our hearts burning within us?*



*“Were not our hearts burning within us?”* said the two disciples who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

It’s not hard to imagine why those two felt the way they did, but what about us? We are disciples too, and we have encountered Christ.

It’s been just two weeks since Easter morning. Does it still feel like Easter? Is your heart burning with you?



In her wisdom, the Church gives us the liturgical year in order to bring a steady rhythm to our faith and worship, and to help us refocus on the essentials.

The highlights of the year are the two dual seasons of *Advent and Christmas* and of *Lent and Easter*: two pairs consisting of preparation and celebration, of somber reflection and joyful relief.

It seems strange to say it, but we are good at preparation ... but not so good at celebration.

Think about Advent and Christmas:

During the weeks of Advent we put so much effort into preparing for Christmas. Then bam! -- on December 26<sup>th</sup> it’s over, even though the Christmas season lasts for two weeks.

How do you take in the birth of the Son God in just one day?

I think we do Lent even better than we do Advent, but on the Monday after Easter Sunday, what happens? Have we begun the fifty days of Easter, or is it the season of *‘thank goodness it’s not Lent anymore’*?

The Easter Season celebrates the Resurrection and the Gift of the Holy Spirit ... and all that those events mean for us who believe.

- A poet once described the meaning of the resurrection this way:  
*One short sleep past, we wake eternally /And death shall be no more ...*
- St. Paul described the meaning of Pentecost for the baptized this way:  
*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you ...*

The Resurrection and the Holy Spirit are the two great mysteries that we are meant to ponder during Easter ... that we are meant to wrap our minds and hearts around. The Church doesn't think you can do that in a single day, so she gives us fifty.



Maybe it helps to remember that these mysteries are baptismal mysteries. Easter is the great season of baptism after all.

After the resurrection Jesus said to the apostles: *"Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."*

Baptism is the only sure way we know of to enter heaven and eternal life with God.

It is through baptism that we are freed from original sin and become adopted children of God.

Baptism is how we receive the Holy Spirit. It is how we come to share in the priesthood of Christ.

When you think about your baptism, shouldn't your heart burn within you?



At the beginning of Lent I always receive ashes on my forehead. They remind me that I am a sinner in need of forgiveness. They remind me that I'm going to die. Unfortunately I get busy during the rest of the day and it's that's hard to keep those thoughts present in my mind.

But eventually I find myself in front a mirror and I'm startled to see a dirty smear of ashes on my forehead. "Ahh ...," I think, "it's Lent."

But the next day, the ashes are gone, and if I don't quickly begin my Lenten disciplines and rituals, then I lose the spirit of the season altogether. My Lenten rituals are reminders, like little visions of ashes, which keep me in the season.



There is parallel in this season to the ashes of Lent.  
It is the *Sprinkling Rite* that begins at the Vigil and on Easter Sunday.

As the ashes remind us that we are sinners, the sprinkling reminds us that we have been baptized – that we are children of God whose sins have been forgiven and for whom the gates of heaven are open.

As the ashes remind us that we separate ourselves from God, the sprinkling reminds us that we are reconciled through baptism – that we are separated from God no more for we are temples of the Holy Spirit.

Ashes remind us of the filth of sin and of death.  
Sprinkling reminds us of resurrection and eternal life.  
What the ashes represent, baptism washes away.

If you really ponder your baptism, your heart should burn within you.



Sometimes when I am sprinkling people with water, they flinch a little bit ... as though something a little harsh or unpleasant just happened.

Most people just take it. They are stoic.

But then there are the people that smile.  
I think they smile because they know they have been baptized, and the sprinkling is a wonderful reminder of what God has done for them.  
Are their hearts burning with them? I don't know... maybe not.  
But is there at least a little glow? I'm sure of it!