

3rd Sunday of Easter

Bishop James Massa, the chair of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine, issued this statement this week:

“For over a thousand years, the Catholic Church has taught just war theory and it is that long tradition the Holy Father carefully references in his comments on war. A constant tenet of that thousand-year tradition is a nation can only legitimately take up the sword ‘in self-defense, once all peace efforts have failed’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2308). That is, to be a just war it must be a defense against another who actively wages war, which is what the Holy Father actually said: ‘He does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war.’”

Bishop Massa concluded, **“When Pope Leo XIV speaks as supreme pastor of the universal Church, he is not merely offering opinions on theology, he is preaching the Gospel and exercising his ministry as the Vicar of Christ. The consistent teaching of the Church is insistent that all people of good will must pray and work toward lasting peace while avoiding the evils and injustices that accompany all wars.”**

At the crucifixion of Jesus, the disciples witnessed plenty of evils and injustices. Throughout his ministry, Jesus had striven to correct evils such as cruelty and greed, and injustices such as the death of the innocent. It's no wonder that the two disciples on the road to Emmaus reflected back on those days with this mournful summary about Jesus's life: **“We were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel.”** They were struggling to integrate the hopes they had in the past with the crucifixion they had witnessed, and the breaking news of some women that Jesus had risen from the dead. They told the stranger walking with them on the road that the women had seen the empty tomb, but they had not seen Jesus himself. They said this unaware that they were seeing and speaking with Jesus himself.

Jesus comes across as a kind of trickster. He teased the two disciples into telling the news; then, he interpreted the scriptures for them before making his big reveal. Only when he broke the bread did they recognize him as the source of their hopes—and then he disappeared. The experience so moved them they had to tell others.

That is the situation of believers today. Anytime we encounter Christ, whether we be a child or the pope, we feel compelled to share the news, to proclaim the gospel plainly and sincerely. This belief in Christ sets the proper context for all our moral decisions—guarding where we place our eyes, speaking the truth, and choosing to love our neighbor—and our enemies, as Jesus taught.

Faith creates a deep sense of peace within us. Once we possess it, others will see it, and they'll want it too. Many people go through life like the disciples who set out for Emmaus—downcast, devoid of hope, seeking redemption. We can be like the risen Jesus for them. At first, our good news for them may be concealed. Once we reveal its hope, we may disappear, but the message remains. Our compassion for those who suffer evils and injustices makes us all ambassadors for peace.