

## **Wednesday of the Easter Octave Homily**

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**St. Agnes Cathedral**

**April 15, 2020**

**I would like to begin by drawing your attention to my *Divine Mercy Sunday Letter* which has just been released on our diocesan website [drvc.org](http://drvc.org).**

**You will find in the Letter an extended reflection on the relevance and power of the *Divine Mercy Devotion* in our tragic and traumatic experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**I am grateful to Fr. Lachlan Cameron for his assistance on the Letter and I encourage you all to read it in advance of *Divine Mercy Sunday* as a way to help us prepare.**

**The Easter Octave that we celebrate this week began on Easter Sunday and ends on the Second Sunday of Easter of the Divine Mercy.**

**All eight days of the Octave are celebrated as Solemnities.**

**The Easter Octave is an intense and focused celebration of the Risen Christ in which we feast on the biblical Resurrection appearances of Christ and give glory to the Risen Lord with the same intensity of Easter Sunday morning.**

**We pray the Gloria at every Mass during the Octave and we conclude the dismissal of the Mass with a double Alleluia.**

**This morning on this Wednesday of the Easter Octave, we pray and celebrate the Road to Emmaus Resurrection Narrative in Luke Chapter 24, verses 13-35.**

**The end of the passage demonstrates so powerfully the interdependence of the Eucharist and the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Catholic Church:**

**“And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?’”**

**In commenting on the Road to Emmaus resurrection appearance, St. Jerome, the patron of biblical scholars and the great biblical translator, wrote: “The flesh of the Lord is true food and his blood true drink; this is the true good that is reserved for us in this present life, to nourish ourselves with his flesh and drink his blood, not only in the Eucharist but also in reading sacred Scripture. Indeed, true food and true drink is the word of God which we derive from the Scriptures.”**

**St. Jerome applies Eucharistic verbs such as eating and drinking to the inspired Word of God.**

**In his Apostolic Exhortation *The Word of the Lord*, in a section entitled “The Word of God and the Eucharist” which is an extended commentary on the Road to Emmaus, Pope Benedict XVI writes:**

**Luke’s account of the disciples on the way to Emmaus enables us to reflect further on this link between the hearing of the word and the**

breaking of the bread (cf. *Lk* 24:13-35). Jesus approached the disciples on the day after the Sabbath, listened as they spoke of their dashed hopes, and, joining them on their journey, “interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (24:27). The two disciples began to look at the Scriptures in a new way in the company of this traveler who seemed so surprisingly familiar with their lives. What had taken place in those days no longer appeared to them as failure, but as fulfilment and a new beginning. And yet, apparently not even these words were enough for the two disciples. The *Gospel of Luke* relates that “their eyes were opened and they recognized him” (24:31) only when Jesus took the bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them, whereas earlier “their eyes were kept from recognizing him” (24:16). The presence of Jesus, first with his words and then with the act of breaking bread, made it possible for the disciples to recognize him. Now they were able to appreciate in a new way all that they had previously experienced with him: “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” (24:32).

55. From these accounts it is clear that Scripture itself points us towards an appreciation of its own unbreakable bond with the Eucharist. “It can never be forgotten that the divine word, read and proclaimed by the Church, has as its one purpose the sacrifice of the new new covenant and the banquet of grace, that is, the Eucharist”.<sup>[193]</sup> Word and Eucharist are so deeply bound together that we cannot understand one without the other: the word of God sacramentally takes flesh in the event of the Eucharist. The Eucharist opens us to an understanding of Scripture, just as Scripture for its part illumines and explains the mystery of the Eucharist. Unless we acknowledge the Lord’s real presence in the Eucharist, our understanding of Scripture remains imperfect. For this reason “the Church has honored the word of God and the Eucharistic mystery with the same reverence, although not with the same worship, and has always and everywhere insisted upon and sanctioned such honor. Moved by the example of her Founder, she

has never ceased to celebrate his paschal mystery by coming together to read ‘in all the Scriptures the things concerning him’ (Lk 24:27) and to carry out the work of salvation through the celebration of the memorial of the Lord and through the sacraments.” (54-55)

Another critical application of the Road to Emmaus Resurrection narrative in these COVID-19 times comes from St. John Paul II in his 2004 Apostolic Letter on the Road to Emmaus entitled *Mane Nobiscum Domine*.

He writes: “The Eucharist is not merely an expression of communion in the Church’s life; it is also a *project of solidarity* for all of humanity. In the celebration of the Eucharist the Church constantly renews her awareness of being a ‘sign and instrument’ not only of intimate union with God but also of the unity of the whole human race. Each Mass, even when celebrated in obscurity or in isolation, always has a universal character. The Christian who takes part in the Eucharist learns to become a promoter of communion, peace and solidarity in every situation.” (27)

May our hearts burning with the Sacred Scripture and the Holy Eucharist help us to be promoters of communion, peace and solidarity in these challenging times.

And may our upcoming celebration of *Divine Mercy Sunday* help us to experience Our Lord’s Divine Mercy and help us too to be heroic and magnanimous instruments of Forgiveness and Peace in the World.