

“Stay with us ...”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, there was a mother—like so many mothers on Mother’s Day, which will be in 2 weeks, who prayed constantly that her two sons would return to the faith. Then, one Sunday morning in church, she looked across the aisle and couldn’t believe her eyes. There sat her two sons. Her joy and gratitude overflowed, as you can imagine.

After Mass, she asked her boys what prompted them to return to the faith. The youngest said:

“One Sunday morning, while vacationing in Colorado, we were driving down a mountain road. It was raining cats and dogs.

Suddenly, we came across an old man without an umbrella. He was obviously soaked through and through. He walked with a noticeable limp. Yet, he kept trudging, doggedly along the winding road. We stopped and picked him up.

It turned out that he was on his way to Sunday Mass at a church 3 miles down the road. So, we took him there.

Since the rain was coming down so hard and, since we had nothing better to do, we decided to wait for the stranger to take him home after Mass.

It wasn’t long before we figured out that we might as well go inside, rather than wait in the car.

As we listened to the scriptures and sat through the Consecration and the breaking of the bread, some-thing moved each of us deeply.

The only way I can explain it, mom, is it felt so ‘right.’ It was like that feeling you get after returning home from a long, tiring trip.”

I share that story of the two brothers with you because it bears a striking resemblance to the story I just read to you from St. Luke’s Gospel. You see, the two disciples traveling along the road to Emmaus had once followed Jesus with hope and joy. They truly believed he had been sent by God to establish God’s kingdom on earth.

Then came the stormy hours of Good Friday. All their hopes & dreams got smashed into a thousand pieces. Totally disillusioned, they left Jesus in an unmarked tomb & returned to their former ways.

It was against this background that they met the ‘stranger’ on the Emmaus Road on Easter Sunday evening.

The disciples listened to him. They watched him break bread. And some-thing moved them deeply. The stranger was not a stranger at all. It was Jesus, himself. He was alive and risen!

Almost the identical thing happened to the two brothers on the Colorado road.

There was a time when they, too, had followed Jesus closely. They, too, truly believed that he was the Son of God, sent by God to redeem the world, to establish his kingdom on earth.

Then came their own Good Friday, that is, the stormy days of adolescence and young adulthood; they questioned everything. All their hopes and dreams got smashed into a thousand pieces. Totally disillusioned, they, too, left Jesus behind in an unmarked tomb, within the recesses of their mind, and went their own way.

It was against this background that they met the ‘stranger’ on the Colorado road, one rainy, Sunday morning. He spoke to the brothers about Jesus, not using words, but using his remarkable, heroic example.

As they listened to the scriptures, their hearts began to burn within them. Then, during the Consecration and the breaking of the bread, they re-discovered the Jesus they had lost.

The story of the disciples on the Emmaus road and the story of the brothers on the Colorado road ...are NOT unlike our own story or that of certain family-members or friends.

We, too, have had stormy periods in our lives, our own Good Friday... when our faith got rocked or smashed into a thousand pieces.

During those stormy periods, perhaps we sinned against the Church. Perhaps we became disillusioned with the Church. Perhaps we even left the Church, which some will do when, next March, the bishop announces the un-avoidable changes needed in the diocese.

BUT ...then, one day, we met someone, perhaps a ‘**stranger,**’ and it was through that person that we found Jesus again, in the midst of the Church, in the Consecration and the breaking of the bread... and **it felt so ‘right’.**

I now close with this simple prayer, the sort prayed by many a mother:

Lord Jesus,
look kindly on those... who have left you behind for dead in some unmarked tomb.
Come to them,
as you did the disciples on the road to Emmaus or to the brothers on that Colorado road.
Explain, to them, the scriptures again.
Stir up, in them,
the fires of faith that still smolder in their heart, begun at baptism.
Sit down with them at table.
Show yourself to them again... in the midst of the Church... in the Consecration of the Mass,
in the breaking of the bread.

And may that very, same, loving God, our Abba, bless you:

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.