

Easter 3, April 19, 2026

Tomorrow morning hundreds of runners are at the starting line of the Boston Marathon. The date is important because it is “Patriot’s Day” in Massachusetts, commemorating the Battle of Lexington and Concord, initiating the Revolutionary War and the alarm spread by William Dawes, Dr. Samuel Prescott and of course, Paul Revere. We all know of Paul Revere, of course, because “Listen my children and give a pause, for the midnight ride of William Dawes” did not sound as good to Longfellow as, “Listen my children and you shall hear of the midnight ride of Paul Revere.” But being serious, the story of that day 251 years ago is important because it did not depend on just one person, but on a community of people coming together to resist the tyranny they faced and to support each other in this struggle. As we reflect on our own troubled times, there is still a need to gather as a community to support each other in resisting the movement toward authoritarianism and to continue our movement toward inclusion. This has been the history of our nation and as we move closer to the 250th anniversary of those hard won freedoms this summer, it is good to recall that this is a gift of our ancestors working together in their day to secure our rights in this day. So, a happy Patriot’s Day to you all and to all those who spend this day running through the streets of Boston.

Prayer: Most merciful and glorious God, today we hear of how the disciples came to see you in the midst of their fears and difficulties. May we recognize your presence with us and share that Good News with our neighbors. This we ask in the name of Jesus our savior and friend. Amen.

This morning as we continue in our Easter season, we hear one of the resurrection appearances of Jesus that I have come to really treasure. Years ago at Union seminary in New York, I remembered noticing the inscription carved into the stone arch over the entrance to the refectory. It read, “cognoverunt eum in fractione panis” that is, “They knew him in the breaking of the bread.” Even though I am sure I must have read and heard this story from Luke’s Gospel before, seeing this written in Latin sent me back to the Bible, to read and study this story and it soon became one of those scriptural stories that has stuck with me over the years. There is so much I appreciate about this story and that I have learned from it, so allow me a few minutes to share it with you. First, as I have often said, when approaching the Bible, it is often useful to establish where the story is happening. Today it is easy because we are told that two of Jesus’ disciples are walking toward Emmaus, about 7 miles from Jerusalem. Now on the one hand, Emmaus was an important site, for it was the place of a

great victory of the great Jewish patriot Judas Maccabeus over the Seleucid Empire about two centuries before, but on the other hand it would be an odd destination because it had been burned to the ground and destroyed by the Romans about the time of Jesus' birth. In other words, these disciples were walking toward a ghost town that had once been important in as a sign of God's protection in the history of Israel. Strange. And just as strange, Jesus comes near to them and they don't recognize him: I think they are so fearful, trying to get out of town as quickly and as quietly as possible they can: they had seen the terrible brutality and violence done to Jesus: what could happen to them? But this stranger who falls in with them wants to know what is going on: and they can't believe it: how can he not know? So they begin to fill him in. But Jesus, ever the rabbi, the teacher, begin to lead them in a Bible study: and he is ready to keep going, but they urge him to stay, and they share a meal together. And there, there in that comfortable and familiar setting, with the bread blessed and broken, their eyes are opened, these disciples see that it is Jesus, the one they had been told was now risen from the tomb and alive, this Jesus now appeared to them, but was gone just as suddenly. Then they remembered how their hearts were burning within them while he talked with them on the road, and leaving their fears behind they return to Jerusalem and the disciples and tell what they saw, how they knew Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

What an incredible story, so powerful in its import and in its details. But what is going on here for Cleopas and his companion? I think Luke is showing us in this story the deep transformative power of the Risen Christ in our lives. At its heart, the story of the resurrection of Jesus is a story of transformation: the stone is rolled away from the tomb, Jesus who was dead, viciously and terribly crucified by the Romans is now alive. Jesus now stands among the disciples once again, teaching and leading them, making his presence known and seeking to motivate the disciples to go to tell the good news of God's power is the power of love stronger than death, love almighty, a love supreme. This is a transformative love that turns the lives of these disciples around, they leave their fears behind and go back to gather in community once more to share with their friends and comrades these events that change their lives and give them courage. This is a love that is present even in the most mundane ways, a love that makes itself known in the breaking of the bread.

I believe that this story is seeking to show us Jesus, Jesus as the Risen Christ in our midst, bringing us the promise of God's transforming love, a love to help us to stand up in the midst of our fears, a love that

burns our hearts, indeed that warms our souls with the joy of being in the very presence of God's loving kindness, bringing us divine mercy, a never-failing peace that passes all understanding, even in the midst of these troubled times, a love that leads us to action to seek that peace for ourselves, for our neighbors and for the world. The transformative power of the resurrection is to roll away those stones, those barriers that impede our free action to reach out in care and concern to all, seeing in all the very face of the Risen Christ.

As disciples of the Risen Christ, disciples now gathered here together two millennia later, we too are still called to live in that transformative power of God's love supreme we find in the resurrection. As we come together this morning, we will gather around this table, gather to bless and break the bread that we might know of Jesus presence with us, opening the eyes of our faith to the horizon of a reign of peace and equity beyond the oppression, injustice and violence of our times. As disciples, we share the deep privilege and solemn responsibility to set our lives on the course of Jesus Way of Love, to show others what we have seen, Jesus in our midst with the promise of a power of love that surpasses all, a love that directs us to go and tell others, and like I've said probably too many times, remembering the admonition of St. Francis to preach the gospel at all times and to use words if necessary. And then, like Cleopas and his companion, to be ready to know Christ in the breaking of the bread, as we will do in just a few minutes! Thanks be to God for this transforming love supreme and thanks be to Christ for walking along with us even in our blindness. Amen.