



Sunday April 19, 2026 Third Sunday of Easter

So, our gospel lesson today finds us and places us on the road on Easter evening. A man named Cleopas and his companion, perhaps his wife, they're followers of Jesus, and they're traveling the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They were lost in thought, discussing the events of the past couple of days. And Jesus, a powerful prophet, all he said and did had been handed over by their own chief priests to be crucified. And there was this rumor of angels, an empty tomb, spread by the women of the group, and a few friends had checked it out, and the tomb was indeed empty. But they didn't see Jesus. What were they supposed to make of all of this? And as they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself comes near and walks with them. They were so preoccupied with the grief, the disappointment, and the confusion they didn't recognize him. And Jesus struck up a conversation, asking them what they were talking about, and they were stunned. Where was this stranger these past couple of days? And they explained the news with great sadness. They hoped Jesus would be the one to set Israel free. But now everything was lost. Even after Jesus started quoting scriptures to them, how it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer before entering his glory, they still didn't recognize the stranger as Jesus. It's ironic, isn't it? They were remembering this story, but not re-remembering this story. Remembering is different from re-remembering. I'm going to talk about this. I'm not talking about that horror movie called "Remember." But what we're talking about, first off, we know the word "remembering" is a task of recalling facts and events, right? Got that part of it. But re-remembering is another action. It's usually the task of putting the pieces back together to remember, to put things back together, and usually to create a new picture, a greater whole in which brings us deeper insight and integration. So, Jesus joins the journey in the process of re-remembering, putting things back together, and he starts by talking about Moses and all the prophets and interprets the things about himself. And in those hours that they passed walking to Emmaus, Jesus helps them hear the story from a different slant. Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things to enter into his glory. Jesus is re-remembering the story, putting it back together so they can see the larger whole.



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So, when they arrived at Emmaus, they invite still this unknown companion for a meal, and the stranger took the bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to them. And in that act, their eyes are open, and everything becomes re-membered, put together, made whole. They recognize Jesus, Jesus is that, and he vanished. Not as a punishment or a tease, but because the re-remembering had succeeded, their hearts were now open, and their minds awakened to the truth. We're not our hearts burning within us, they say, as he was explaining the Scriptures to us, they wonder in amazement. Like Cleopas and his companion, we are always somewhere on the journey, right? Our life story is always, as we go along, as we get older. We always revise, revisit, rewrite, remember, seeing things from a larger perspective. And we find here how Jesus's story intersects with our story in new and dynamic ways.

As you may know, as I mentioned last week, I went with a team from my Presbyteria Long Island to the border between El Paso and Ciudad Juarez, in Mexico, with a border organization called Abara, which is a community of peace builders and working on both sides of the border to encourage that journey together, to listen to each other's stories, to remember our lives together, and find Christ in the midst of these. I would like to share with you that on this journey at the border, I met Christ in a meal. I met Christ through a 22-year-old man named Sestos, Seis in Spanish, for those who know Spanish is the word for "Six," right? So, Sestos was nicknamed by his high school friends as "Six" or "Sixthos," because it was Sestos, right? Anyway, so Sestos came to the United States with his mother and sister when he was three days old. His mother made the cross over the Rio Grande River and reunited with family, resettled in El Paso. Sace's family cobbled a life together, his mom cleaned homes, his dad washed and detailed cars, Sace didn't know he was illegal until he was in high school. And when he was 17 years old, his family's fortunes changed a bit, and they found a place where only two people could stay. So, Sestos lied to his parents and said, "I have friends I can go live with." In reality, Sace became homeless for about six months. He slept under a canal with the cardboard as his blanket. He slept in a junked car. Now, he got up early to eat at a 5.30 a.m. breakfast at a local church, then he could take a shower at 6.00 a.m. before heading off to high school. In skipping lunch, he would go to the Salvation Army for dinner, and Sace would do his



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homework at the local McDonald's, digging in receipts out of the trash to make it seem like he had eaten there, and then he would go back to the car. His clothes became well worn, he stuck cardboard in his shoes to cover over the holes. And through this time, he maintained and graduated with a 4.0 grade point average. Sace never saw a doctor or a dentist in his life, never saw a life outside of El Paso. Then, Sace, what he did see, though, was that his friends could move on to college while he had to get by with menial work. Sace felt there's nothing wrong with the work that he had to do roofing and construction, but he wanted more for his life. He wanted to go to college, like many of his friends had. But these pathways were closed to him because of his immigration status. Friends offered to marry him so he could get a green card, but he said, "No, I'm not going to do it that way." After his father died last year, Sace decided the only thing he could do was to port himself back to Ciudad Juarez, and for the first time he got a birth certificate and an ID. But on that side of Mexico, although it was his country of origin, it was a foreign country to him. The United States was where he was raised. That was home to him. All his family was in El Paso, it's just a few miles away, but no, he can't visit them. His home of 22 years is closed to him. He can speak Spanish very well, but he doesn't write well in Spanish. But with the help of Abara, this agency that sponsored our trip, Sace found a place to stay. He's taking an exam to get into the local university because he's planning to study engineering. Sace says he's not happy, but he's also not sad. He understands he has nothing against the U.S. but the American dream? No, it's dead to people like him. I don't know what you think about immigration policies. Some people think Sace did the right thing given his alien status, but to be honest with you, I believe people who lost out is us because here was a young man with a dream who worked hard while going to school, got good grades, stayed out of trouble, didn't do drugs or drink. Sace's story to me was an example of how we need to re-member how we look at migrants and our policies that we have developed over the years. And we need to re-member them into something that is perhaps something more just and humane and invests in young people who want to work, who want to give back, who want to improve our country.



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I hope listening to Sace's story, this little snippet of it, can lead us to listen to the countless stories of other migrants who seek to re-member a system that is big enough to include the dreams of someone like Sestos. Because you see, that's what I believe the gospel today calls us to do for each other because we're all on this some journey and we are to be companions for each other and to listen to the stories, connect to the stories and other faith journey to offer that hospitality. And in this way, we act as Jesus did, opening minds and hearts to the larger, grander story that Jesus laid out for us. Because you see, our lives are a constant process of re-membering. To remember the story as Jesus tells it so that we can see all that we miss when we don't look at the larger picture and to share that sacred meal and time together. So today as we come to the table, I invite us to re-member to open our hearts and to imagination of how we can remember our stories, our stories collectively and our larger stories of people like Sestos that will tell us and remind us we are a resurrection people with hearts that burn within us and eyes that can open, that can take in all the stories that Jesus is opening our eyes to see. Amen.