

The apostles hide in the upper room, even though none of the authorities, Hebrew or Roman are looking for them. As far as the authorities are concerned, this inconvenient Jesus, this so called messiah, one of many who have made the claim, particularly in the past 50 years or so, is dead. Looking to their experience, once the leader of a messiah cult is dead, the followers disperse and the problem goes away.

Since several of these incidents happened during their own life times, the Apostles have to be torn apart by grief, doubt, and fear. They want to believe, they have left everything behind to follow Jesus. They experienced his miracles; they knew him as a teacher and as a friend. The Last Supper delighted and confused them; the wonder of having Jesus wash their feet, the joy of the celebration, not quite sure what the bread as Christ's body and wine as his blood means; sad about his announcement that he would be leaving them.

They were probably ashamed of their actions in the Garden on the Mount of Olives, and during Our Lord's Passion. They had to wonder how they would be received by Jesus if he really had risen from the dead; a real possibility since the tomb was empty and Mary Magdalene had possibly seen an angel or maybe even the risen Christ.

Then 2 disciples return from a trip to Emmaus and recount their story about seeing Jesus on the road, but not recognizing him until the breaking of the bread. Then suddenly Jesus stands in their midst. He encourages them to touch him and eats something to show that he is alive. What an emotional rollercoaster! They thought that they had lost Jesus during his Paschal Sacrifice. The empty tomb bewildered them, and their sorrow was removed and their faith renewed by their re-discovery of Jesus in the upper room.

We have a tendency to look at these events, particularly their experiences immediately following the Passion on Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday as just an historical account intended to validate and strengthen our faith in Jesus, and so it is. But, it is also so much more. The experience applies directly to us as we live our lives.

We all claim to love Jesus. We are here at mass, we say some prayers, especially when we are in trouble, but like in all relationships there are times when our relationship with Jesus just seems to be more trouble than it is worth. We pray for something and it doesn't happen. A favorite person dies or is severely injured and we are angry with God. Summer comes around and it is just too much trouble to get the kids out of bed and go to Mass. After all, no one will notice since no one is taking attendance in the classroom. We claim to love Jesus, but he is a lot of work.

However, is there anything that is really worthwhile in the experience of our lives that doesn't take a lot of work? Can you play soccer or baseball or cheer lead without hard work and dedication? What about education? Do you hold your textbook to your forehead like Johnny Carson and know all of the answers without having to study? I'm sure that your employer is happy to pay you to sit and goof off at work for 40 hours a week without producing anything; that is a guaranteed way to earn a promotion.

What would the quality of your relationship be with your best friend and spouse you just blew them off every time something else comes up that seemed to be more interesting at that moment? How often do we just quietly divorce Jesus and separate ourselves from him creating our own upper room experience?

We come here to celebrate Mass with the community and in the process we receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. An act that brings us closer to him than he was to his disciples prior to the Last

Supper. Then we leave him for whatever reason feels good on that day. We run away from the Cross, just like most of the Apostles did on Good Friday. We don't want to pick up our cross and follow Christ, fishing or golf or sleeping in is more important.

If we are blessed, something or someone brings us back. Class for our children, friendship, or a sense of loss because even though we have left Jesus, at some level we still love him and his love for us tugs on our heart. But how are we going to be received by Jesus? Is he going to be angry? Is he going to reject us like we rejected him? We listen to our friends who are still going to Mass and want to justify our running away, but it rings hollow in our own ears, in our own hearts.

At this point in our lives we really only have two courses of action. We can harden our hearts and basking in our own self justification continue to turn away from God, or we can look at how Jesus treats his Apostles in the upper room and take hope. He appeared in their midst and said "Peace be with you". He didn't castigate them for running away; he didn't pull all of their doubts and fears out of them so he could ridicule them for their weakness. He told them to come on over to re-establish and renew their relationships with him. He did everything that they needed to make them comfortable with his presence.

God brings life out of death. He died on the cross, resurrected himself and reconciled with the Apostles in the upper room. He offers that same reconciliation to us every time we separate ourselves from him through sin, every time we run away because the relationship is just too much work, every time we divorce him quietly through benign neglect.

We all know that great relationships, great successes in our lives require great sacrifices. Once we decide to commit to a loving relationship with Christ, I believe that we will be amazed at how easy, how little work, and how fulfilling that relationship can be.