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# Easter Wednesday

**Date:** Wednesday, April 23, 2025 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** C
**First Reading:** Acts 3:1–10
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 105:1–9 | **Response:** Psalm 105:3b
**Gospel Acclamation:** Psalm 118:24
**Gospel Reading:** Luke 24:13–35
**Preached at:** the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

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There is something unmistakable about a heart set on fire. It cannot be contained, ignored, or mistaken for anything less than a profound encounter with the truth. This is the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus — and it is our story too.

A stranger walks beside them, listening to their sorrows, their dashed hopes, their faltering faith. They speak as though Jesus were still dead. The cross, in their minds, was the end of the story. And yet, as the mysterious traveler opens the Scriptures, something stirs within them. A fire, once extinguished by despair, begins to burn again. It is not a fire of destruction, but of illumination.

Luke doesn't tell us why they fail to recognize Jesus. Perhaps grief clouds their vision. Or perhaps, like us, they are so focused on how they *expected* God to act, they miss Him when He is standing right beside them.

And we know something of that grief today. The death of Pope Francis has touched the heart of the Church. A pastor who insisted that mercy is the face of God, who urged us to be a field hospital for the wounded — he now rests in the arms of the Risen Lord. As the Church prepares to commend his soul to God and as Cardinals begin to gather in Rome, we too walk with sorrow and questions. But we do not walk alone.

What Luke does tell us is this: the disciples' eyes are opened in the breaking of the bread. And just as they recognize Jesus, He vanishes. Why? Because He is now present in a new way — no longer only beside them, but within them.

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The Eucharist is not merely a reminder of Christ. It is the Real Presence of the Risen Lord among us. We do not need to walk the dusty roads of Palestine to meet Jesus. We meet Him at every Mass — in the Word proclaimed, in the breaking of the bread, and in those sacred encounters with one another, where we recognize the image of the God in whose likeness we were created.

The first reading from Acts echoes the same truth. A man, lame from birth, sits at the Beautiful Gate, asking for coins. Peter — who had once denied Jesus — now speaks with apostolic boldness: “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise and walk.” And he does. He leaps. He praises God.

This is the power of the Resurrection. It transforms cowards into witnesses, beggars into dancers, bread into Christ. It does not erase suffering or sorrow, but it transfigures them — turns mourning into mission.

That is the invitation for us in Zambia in 2025. The question is not whether Christ is risen — that is the truth we proclaim in this Easter Octave — but whether we are willing to live as if He is. Are we willing to notice the suffering at our gates? The hungry child, the grieving family, the silenced voice? Are we willing to offer more than aid — to offer the bold, risky hope of the Gospel?

The Psalm reminds us: “Rejoice, O hearts that seek the Lord.” But Easter joy is not a soft feeling — it is a fire. It is what sent the disciples running back to Jerusalem. It is what emboldened Peter to raise a crippled man in Jesus’ name. It is what animates the Church today — even in grief, even in uncertainty — to remember not just the past deeds of the Lord, but to embody them now.

Ignatian spirituality invites us to enter the Gospel with our whole selves. So imagine walking to Emmaus. What griefs do you carry? What disappointments have bent your back? What sorrows do you pour out to the silent Stranger?

And then imagine this: your heart begins to burn. As the Word is opened, as the bread is broken, you see Him. What do you do next?

The disciples didn’t stay in Emmaus. They didn’t hold onto the moment. They rose. They ran. They shared the good news. That urgency is ours now.

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As we pray this week for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis, and for the Cardinals gathering in Rome — for their safe travels and holy discernment — let our grief not still our steps. Let it fuel our mission. The best tribute we can offer is to live the Gospel he preached: with mercy, with fire, and with the joy of the Resurrection.

For the Risen Christ walks among us. He speaks in the Scriptures. He feeds us in the Eucharist. And then He sends us — to say to the broken: rise and walk. To proclaim to the world: Christ is alive. The tomb is empty. Death is defeated. Love has triumphed.

And so I offer you three questions for prayerful reflection:

- Where is Jesus walking beside me, unnoticed, in my daily life?
- When have I felt my heart burning within me, and how did I respond?
- How is God calling me to bring the fire of the Resurrection to those in need — especially the poor and marginalized in Zambia today?

May our eyes be opened.
May our hearts be set aflame.
And may we rise — as witnesses of the Risen Lord — to proclaim, through tears and with courage:
Christ is alive. Pope Francis is at rest. Alleluia.

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.