



Pastoral Aid on Listening and Civil Dialogue

Use this pastoral aid on the 3rd Sunday of Easter, April 26th, 2020, or any time the themes of listening, witness, or dialogue come up in the readings.

Introduction:

Can you think of a time when you've felt really listened to? Not just heard, but someone sat with you and listened carefully to what you had to say? How different that can be from our everyday experience! Jesus and the disciples on the road to Emmaus show us a great example of how to show love through deep and thoughtful listening and sharing. As Catholics, being unafraid to listen carefully to our neighbors is a way we show compassion and love.

Readings and Reflections:

[First Reading: Acts 2:14, 22-33](#)

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raise his voice, and proclaimed: "You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem. Let this be known to you and listen to my words. You who are Israelites, hear these words. Jesus the Nazorean was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know. This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him. But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it. For David says of him:

'I saw the Lord ever before me, with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed. Therefore my heart has been glad and my tongue has exulted; my flesh, too, will dwell in hope, because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'"

My brothers, one can confidently say to you about the patriarch David that he died and was buried, and his tomb is in our midst to this day. But since he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that neither was he abandoned to the netherworld nor did his flesh see corruption. God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses. Exalted at the right hand of God, he received the promise of the holy Spirit from the Father and poured it forth, as you (both) see and hear.



Reflection on 1st reading:

- We recognize the gift of Christ in our world, and how we turn away from Christ and deny that gift by instead focusing on the worldly ways that preoccupy us.
- We are witnesses to the work of Christ, and recipients of the Holy Spirit; we see and hear the work of God in our world. The role as witness entails both rights and responsibilities: to dwell in hope and share that hope with others. We must be like David who believes in God and is filled with joy-joy that spills over to those around us through our actions.

[Gospel Reading: Luke 24:13-35](#)

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?"

They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see."

And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.*

As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them.



With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?”

So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, “The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!” Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Reflection on the Gospel:

- Jesus is present among us even when we cannot see him or recognize him.
- The relationship between the travelers on the road teaches us something about how we can be present to one another, even in difficult moments.
- Jesus stays with them in their moment of need. He is very intentionally present, showing them he cares through listening and accompanying these disciples. They are scared and disappointed since they just witnessed the death of Jesus but do not yet know what to make of the news of the Resurrection.
- Jesus speaks truth to them with love in their moment of darkness.
- Upon recognizing Jesus, they immediately get up and evangelize the others about it. They recognize, almost instinctually, that this experience of recognizing Jesus requires them to do something, to tell someone, to move beyond themselves into their community.

Applications:

- We hear the voice of God in many ways, sometimes like that of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Someone is speaking truth to us and we have a hard time recognizing this truth.
- Especially in a time when we can be unsure of what sources to trust, or who is genuinely sharing good news with us, we can withdraw—afraid of disagreement or uncertainty.
- However, we are called to be like the disciples on the road to Emmaus. We can listen carefully with the ears of our hearts as we encounter Jesus in our brothers and sisters and their stories and experiences.



- This is especially important when there are divisions in our community, for example, the division seen during an election year. At this time, we are especially called to imitate Jesus' model of encounter and compassion.
- We are called to encounter and accompany others, even when we disagree with them. This involves being willing to engage in dialogue. Just like any authentic human connection, the process of dialogue is complicated, often uncomfortable, and requires vulnerability and trust. We must rely on our faith in Christ who taught us that everyone is truly our neighbor, worthy of our love and respect. Think about a person with whom you strongly disagree about something. Do you recognize Christ's presence in him or her? What are the things that prevent you from seeing Christ's presence in those around you? How can you remove those barriers to be more like the disciples, open to recognizing Christ's presence in those who walk the road with you?
- Civility does not mean that we see all viewpoints as equal, nor does it mean that we agree for the sake of agreement. While respecting the dignity of all, we acknowledge that not all viewpoints are equally valid. [In addition, all who exercise their freedom of speech have an obligation to ensure that they come to conclusions based on data from credible and reputable sources, and that care is taken to avoid seeking the truth selectively, that is, only when it is convenient to us.] Civil dialogue is different from remaining silent in the face of disagreement. Listening to opposing views is a part of seeking clarity. We seek to listen to others' views in order to understand how our views on a topic are different and why; we ask questions, and seek to find common good.
- Promoting compassion, civility and dialogue are ways we can put our faith in Christ in action. We can do this in ordinary everyday ways, and we can set aside intentional time to practice and engage in civil dialogue.
- The USCCB has created a campaign for civil dialogue called [Civilize It](#). It's an opportunity for Catholics and people of good will to commit to honoring the human dignity of those to whom we find ourselves listening through civility, compassion, and clarity. We are called to assume the posture of the disciples on the road listening to Jesus, remembering that each of us is a beloved child of God with inherent human dignity. There are resources, reflections, and prayers available at [CivilizeIt.org](#) to help us model civil dialogue in our families, workplaces, schools, and communities.
- Jesus was 'made known to them in the breaking of the bread.' How can you help others experience transformation as those disciples on the road to Emmaus?



Sample Prayers of the Faithful:

We pray for our leaders, those seeking to be leaders and those already elected.

May they have the experience of being a beloved child of God and allow that love to transform their words and actions towards love and respect for all people.

We pray for our communities.

May we seek understanding first and listen attentively to those who disagree with us, seeking to be examples in all settings of the love Jesus.

We pray for our Church.

May the love of Christ that we know guide and direct our actions and words over the next year so that we may live out the Jesus's example to love each person.



Sample Bulletin Announcements:

Civilize It: Dignity beyond the Debate

As Catholics, we have a long tradition of putting our faith in action through engagement in the political process. Don't allow the vitriolic rhetoric you hear to turn you and others off from engaging in the public square. Join *Civilize It*, a Catholic call for all people to honor each other's dignity by engaging in respectful dialogue. Take the pledge and find resources at CivilizeIt.org to bring civility to your home, school, workplace, and community.

Put your faith into action: Practice civil dialogue.

In their statement on *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the U.S. Catholic bishops remind Catholics that we are called to engage in charitable, respectful and civil dialogue during election season. In a culture that is dominated by "partisan attacks, sound bites and media hype," the Church calls for "a different kind of political engagement" (no. 14). Join our Catholic witness for civil dialogue by learning more and taking the pledge for civility at CivilizeIt.org. You can take the pledge individually or as a group and invite others to take the pledge too. Visit FaithfulCitizenship.org to access resources on civil dialogue and on how our faith calls us to engage during election season and beyond.

(Use this announcement any time, along with the resources about the importance of civil dialogue and how we can contribute as Catholics, all available at CivilizeIt.org)

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