I. Introduction

Once there was a young medical student who had to go away from his fiancée for a month to take his comprehensive exams during his final year of college. This was a real hardship for him, as the two of them were deeply in love, and as a result, he was very sad, lonely, and depressed. While on the trip, his bus stopped at a Greyhound station, and he went into the lunchroom and sat down at the counter. An elderly woman noticed him and said, “Honey, you sure do look miserable”; the med student answered “I am,” and before he knew it, he was crying. The woman came and sat next to him, touched his shoulder, and asked what was wrong, and he told her all about his fiancée and how much he missed her, and even showed the woman a picture of her. She responded, “Oh, what a beautiful young woman,” and then she began to tell him her story. She had been married to a traveling salesman, who was now deceased, and they had been deeply in love; as a result, they always used to cry each time he had to go away on a sales trip, but this only made their reunions that much more joyous and beautiful. She said, “Marriage is wonderful. You’re going to have a wonderful marriage; everything is going to be fine.” Then, thinking the young man would feel better if he had something to eat, she ordered a donut, broke it in two, and gave him half. As she was doing so, there was an announcement over the loudspeaker, and the woman exclaimed, “Oh, my bus is here!”, and she hurried off. With that, the young man’s eyes were figuratively opened; he felt uplifted, and he realized he had been touched by a moment of grace (Bausch, A World of Stories, p. 210).

Like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, this young med student experienced an important visitation at a moment when he was very vulnerable and in need of new hope. We sometimes find ourselves in this position; God in His love responds to our need—and we should learn to appreciate the ways He touches us through other people. Because of our worries and problems and experiences of sadness, especially in these difficult times, we’re quick to identify with the young medical student—but sometimes we’re called to play the role taken by the older woman. Not only do we have to learn to recognize Jesus in others; we must also let others discover Him in us.

II. Development

Cleopas and his companion came to recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread—in other words, by His willingness to minister to them, and listen to them, and be present to them in their need. They received new hope at the darkest moment of their lives; they were able to believe in the truth of the Resurrection, and then speak of it to others. This is the transformation the Risen Lord seeks to work in each one of us. In the 2nd Reading St. Peter urges us to conduct ourselves with reverence during our journey through life, for we’ve been ransomed not by perishable and ultimately worthless things like silver and gold, but by the precious Blood of Christ. This was God’s eternal plan, but it was fully revealed only on Easter Sunday itself; through Christ’s Resurrection, we can live forever
in glory and joy and peace. This Good News of salvation should not only fill us with gratitude, but make us eager to see others accept and rejoice in this same gift. This is why Peter and the other apostles spoke to the many people assembled in Jerusalem, bearing witness to all that God had done through His Son Jesus Christ. They could not keep this amazing news to themselves; indeed, it was the Lord’s plan that they proclaim the Gospel and invite everyone to salvation, sharing the same gift they had received with as many people as possible.

III. Conclusion

Thanks to our parents and grandparents, and the priests, nuns, teachers, and catechists we’ve known throughout our lives, we’ve heard the message of the Gospel and have come to believe that Jesus is Lord. Many people have ministered to us, as the woman in the bus stop did to the medical student; we in turn are called to minister to others. There’s a beautiful story about a devout Christian whose young son became gravely ill; after a series of medical tests, the doctors gave the father the terrible news that his boy was dying, and there was nothing more they could do for him. The man agonized over what to tell his son, and he prayed to the Holy Spirit for guidance. After this, he went into his son’s hospital room, prayed with him, and read aloud the passage of Scripture in which Jesus said, “Let the children come to Me,” and gently told his son that the doctors thought he had only a short time to live. Then the father asked, “Are you afraid to meet Jesus, my boy?” Blinking back a few tears, the child answered bravely, “No, not if He’s like you, Dad” (Zuck, The Speaker’s Quote Book, p. 69).

What a wonderful thing it would be to have someone say to us, “If Jesus is like you, I want to meet Him and know Him and follow Him”—and in fact, we’re supposed to try to live in such a manner. Life is like a journey, and we’re called to offer guidance, direction, companionship, encouragement, and support to those who are traveling with us—as Jesus did for the two disciples journeying to Emmaus. Our efforts to accept others, our expressions of sympathy and understanding for those who are suffering, our example of integrity and commitment, our compassion for people undergoing a difficult time, our unwavering trust that everything that happens can somehow serve God’s plan, our respect for the dignity of every person we meet, and our willingness to talk about Jesus and share His love with others, are all ways in which we can preach the Gospel and help make Christ present in the world.

Our Lord calls each of us to be living signs of His presence, and it’s entirely possible that our encounter with another person will be the only time he or she ever witnesses the Gospel in action. This is a heavy responsibility that’s placed upon us; it’s also a glorious opportunity. If enough of us open our hearts to Christ’s grace and allow ourselves to be remade in His image, many lives will be touched, and our world will be transformed and renewed.