



## Mass Distractions

**Read:** Luke 24: 13-35

In the gospel, we hear the story of Jesus traveling with two companions on the road to Emmaus. The pair fail to recognize Jesus as they travel along the way, but their eyes are opened to his presence during the breaking of the bread.

Whenever I read this Bible passage, I am reminded of the structure of the mass. A regular mass has two essential parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We see this same sequence in the Emmaus story. First, Jesus opens the scriptures, and second, he presides over the meal, culminating with the breaking of the bread (the Eucharist). The Church teaches that, "The two parts which in a sense go to make up the Mass...are so closely connected with each other that they form but one single act of worship" (*CS*, 56).

Of course our Sunday experience can often be like the disciples. We are with Jesus, but fail to recognize him. Our minds wander, we get distracted and we fail to see what is truly in front of us. There is no easy solution to this problem. We want our hearts "burning within us" at mass, but the opposite is frequently the case.

There are two things we can do. First, make the commitment to go, because God blesses our efforts. The disciples were blessed by Jesus' presence, even though they weren't aware it was occurring. Second, pray about it. Ask God to help you be more attentive. Let him know your struggles. The simple prayer "Lord, help me concentrate" is short, but effective.

Every Sunday at mass Jesus invites us to have our own intimate journey with him. It is he who opens the Scriptures for us and breaks the bread. When we struggle to perceive Jesus' presence in the mass, we must ask him to open our eyes so that we may recognize him.