

Goodmorning and happy mother's day to all the moms and grandmothers. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Brendan Elliott and I am one of the seniors of our youth group. When sitting down to write my sermon for this Sunday, I was told to take thoughts from the readings and get inspiration from other sermons and other people. Between these instructions and my admiration of Father Ken Henry's sermon structure and incorporation of humor, I'd like to start off with a little example of why you should all respect our mothers:

Mom and Dad were watching TV when Mom said, "I'm tired, and it's getting late. I think I'll go to bed." She then went to the kitchen to make sandwiches for the next day's lunches, rinsed out the popcorn bowls, took meat out of the freezer for supper the following evening, checked the cereal box levels, filled the sugar container, put spoons and bowls on the table and started the coffee pot for brewing the next morning. She then put some wet clothes into the dryer, put a load of clothes into the wash, ironed a shirt and secured a loose button. She picked up the newspapers strewn on the floor, picked up the game pieces left on the table and put the telephone book back into the drawer. She watered the plants, emptied a wastebasket and hung up a towel to dry. She yawned and stretched and headed for the bedroom. She stopped by the desk and wrote a note to the teacher, counted out some cash for the field trip, and pulled a textbook out from hiding under the chair. She signed a birthday card for a friend, addressed and stamped the envelope and wrote a quick note for the grocery store. She put both near her purse. Mom then washed her face, put on moisturizer, brushed and flossed her teeth and trimmed her nails. Dad called, "I thought you were going to bed." "I'm on my way," she said. She put some water into the dog's dish and put the cat outside, then made sure the doors were locked. She looked in on each of the kids and turned out a bedside lamp, hung up a shirt, threw some dirty socks in the hamper, and had a brief conversation with the one up still doing homework. In the bedroom, she set the alarm, laid out clothing for the next day, straightened up the shoe rack. She added three things to her list of things to do for tomorrow. About that time, Dad turned off the TV and announced to no one

in particular "I'm going to bed," and he did.

In today's reading, Luke tells us of two disciples on the road to Emmaus following the crucifixion of Christ. They are talking together about the previous events that had occurred when Jesus begins traveling with the two. And remember that these two disciples are made by God to not recognize Jesus, so they just figure he is another ordinary traveler going the same way they are. As they talk to Jesus he starts to see that they have been questioning the recent events and are doubting the scriptures up until that time. Because of this, Jesus reminds them of all the scriptures relating to him, his death and his resurrection all the way back to Moses. By the time they approach the city of Emmaus, they have taken a liking to this traveler and invite him to stay the night with them. It is not until Jesus breaks the bread and gives thanks do the two disciples recognize who he is, and by that time he is gone.

There is a lot to this story that is peculiar and has been left open for interpretation. Many theologians believe that every single word written in the Bible has been specifically used for a reason. Now, I don't know how EVERY SINGLE word can be used for a specific reason...there's only so many ways you can use the words such as a, is and the...but that's beside the point. When doing some research on this reading I found another sermon breaking down the who, why and where of the passage. What I found out is that the who and the where may not even exist. Apparently, the two disciples in this story, one named Cleopas and the other not even having an identity, are only mentioned in the Bible ONCE...in this passage. As a matter of fact, this story is not told anywhere else in the bible either. It is mentioned a little bit in what I believe is John, but the full story is only told in the book of Luke. So back to the two followers; no where else in the Bible are these two mentioned, thus opening the doors for questions. Who REALLY are these two followers? Why are they so important that they have a major role in this one story but not so important this is their only appearance in the entire Bible? Going back to the "every word is used on purpose" to answer these questions, these two disciples could be

ANYONE. They could be anyone who is blinded to the face of Jesus waiting to recognize him. They could be representations of anyone in any point in time.

These two know the story but they debate the truth and reality of it until Jesus basically gives them the physical proof to open their eyes. In a similar situation but with VERY different details, this past week, the most wanted man in the world was finally compromised by our military and intelligence agencies, Osama Bin Laden. Now, I am not trying to compare Bin Laden to Jesus Christ in any way shape or form, but more the concept of the story given and the people receiving the story believing it or not. Also with this very controversial example, I am not trying to give you my opinion or change yours on the situation, but our Federal Government has come out with the story that Bin Laden has been killed and no longer will reign terror across the globe, but what evidence do we have to support this information. The government has decided to not release any physical evidence that proves the brave team of SEALs actually got the terrorist mastermind which means we are expected to trust the information is true based off of what we have been told, much like the followers in today's reading. They questioned the reality of Jesus's returning to save Israel and the Holy Land because they had not seen anything happen; they were just told by several parts of the scripture that it was going to happen. There are people around the country that do not believe that Bin Laden has really been killed and that it is just a cover up to end the hunt for him because of a lack of physical evidence on the government's part and a lack of faith on the individual's parts. Now, there might be a possibility of an eye opening event to come along and confirm the reality of Osama Bin Laden's death, but until it does we are left to either have faith that we are being told the truth or to question the reality of it. We must have faith in what the Bible tells us whether there is physical evidence or not.

The where of this story is simple; the road to Emmaus. But not simple because nobody can figure out

where Emmaus is or at least was. The Bible says it is or was about 7 miles outside of Jerusalem, but nobody has been able to find any evidence of a city, town or village called Emmaus. Another mysterious aspect of this story. Now we have strange disciples who may or may not exist traveling to a town that may or may not exist. So again going back to analyzing every word in the Bible for it's purpose, this may have been left open for us to interpret who these people are and where they are. It could be anyone traveling anywhere and has not yet been spiritually awakened to the value of Christ. We could be the unknown disciple and the road to Emmaus could be the road of life or as writer Frederick Buechner described it as "the place we go when the world becomes too much for us;" again, left open for us to decide.

So why did these unknown disciples take this road to an unknown place? If Buechner is correct in saying that Emmaus is a place where people go when the world becomes too much to bear, the two could have been trying to escape the saddening reality of Jesus' sacrifice seeing that they were completely unaware of his revival at the time. After they do recognize it's Jesus they have been traveling with, they returned to Jerusalem to share the events of their travel with Jesus' inner circle as it could be called. They may have been so overwhelmed with the passion that they made a spiritual or mental trip to Emmaus to escape the sadness, only to be reminded of the scriptures and Christ's story and then return to the real world and share the news with everyone else who was skeptical of Jesus' return.

And now that I have left many if not all of you finding different interpretations of Cleopas and his brother, as well as the road to Emmaus, I'd like to close with another story:

There was once king who decided to set aside a special day to honor his greatest subject. When the big day arrived, there was a large gathering in the palace courtyard. Four finalists were brought forward,

and from these four, the king would select the winner. The first person presented was a wealthy philanthropist. The king was told that this man was highly deserving of the honor because of his humanitarian efforts. He had given much of his wealth to the poor. The second person was a celebrated physician. The king was told that this doctor was highly deserving of the honor because he had rendered faithful and dedicated service to the sick for many years. The third person was a distinguished judge. The king was told that the judge was worthy because he was noted for his wisdom, his fairness, and his brilliant decisions. The fourth person presented was an elderly woman. Everyone was quite surprised to see her there, because her manner was quite humble, as was her dress. She hardly looked the part of someone who would be honored as the greatest subject in the kingdom. What chance could she possibly have, when compared to the other three, who had accomplished so much? Even so, there was something about her the look of love in her face, the understanding in her eyes, her quiet confidence. The king was intrigued, to say the least, and somewhat puzzled by her presence. He asked who she was. The answer came: "You see the philanthropist, the doctor, and the judge? Well, she was their teacher!" That woman had no wealth, no fortune, and no title, but she had unselfishly given her life to produce great people. The king could not see the value in the humble lady. He missed the significance of the teacher. Often we miss the value of those around us. We would be surprised to know how often we miss the presence of Christ just as Cleopas and his brother missed the significance of the stranger on the road to Emmaus.

So there are two things to take away from this reading...We should all have faith in others even when we are skeptical and we should all open our minds and hearts to recognize the value of those around us...today our mothers especially.