

April 29, 2020-Wednesday, Third Week of Easter

Bethsaida

Five of the apostles—Peter, Andrew, James, John and Philip—came from the ancient fishing village of Bethsaida.

The village's exact location is unknown today. Some scholars favor Et-Tel, a mound located along the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Others suggest the Jewish village was along the eastern shore of the Jordan River.

Bethsaida was founded about 10 centuries before Jesus was born. In its early years, the village was possibly the capital of the Kingdom of Geshur (located in what is today the Golan Heights. King David married the daughter of the king of Geshur.)

Besides calling several disciples from the village, Jesus also performed miracles there. At Bethsaida, Jesus restored the sight of the blind man, and performed the miracle of the loaves and fishes.

During the first century A.D., one of Herod the Great's sons, Philip the Tetrarch (who ruled from 4 B.C. until his death in 34 A.D.), renamed Bethsaida "Julias" in honor of Julia, the wife of Roman Emperor Augustus and mother of the Emperor Tiberias. Philip is believed to have died in Bethsaida and was buried there.

The two disciples said: "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."
(Luke 24:21-24)

As a disciple of the Lord, I experience the Lord in many ways in my life, sometimes unpredictable ways, like under the starry sky or before a beautiful sunset or sunrise.

I experience the Lord sometimes when I think deep thoughts...sometimes powerfully in other people...sometimes in tragedy.

But the only place where I can count on experiencing the Lord is in the Eucharist. He comes in a hundred different ways and they are beautiful and they are real. But the one place that is predictable and the one place where my experience of the Lord should be more intense is in the Eucharist.

Some days, I may ask myself: if the Lord can be encountered in so many places, why go to Mass? This week's story of Emmaus tells me why: to meet Jesus in this sacramental way and to have him speak his words, and to break bread with him, is to experience a special kind of regular, intense, predictable, recognizable presence that is different from any other kind.

That's why I go to Mass.

Spend some quiet time with the Lord