

# Hearts Burning at Mass

Homily by Father Bob Gillelan

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*Lightly edited for clarity from recorded audio.*

In today's Gospel, I think we can see a foreshadowing—a foreshadowing of the Liturgy of the Word, and a foreshadowing of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In essence, a foreshadowing of the Mass.

Because when Jesus appears to the disciples, He opens the Scriptures to them. And their hearts burn within them. That is the foreshadowing of the Liturgy of the Word.

And then, at the end of the day, they have a meal with Him, and they break bread. And as they break bread with Him, they come to recognize Him in the breaking of the bread as Lord and Savior, the Risen Jesus Christ. And that corresponds to the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

And the response to all of this is clear: their hearts burn within them, and then there is joy.

## **A Question We All Ask**

Which leads us to ask a very reasonable question. When we celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, why doesn't my heart always burn within me? Why is it that I don't always feel close to Jesus in the celebration of the Mass, if this is the source and summit of what we believe? Why don't I have the same response as the disciples?

## **What Gets in the Way**

Well, the saints and spiritual writers of the Church have some answers. Have you ever been to Mass and allowed your intellect to be distracted? The intellect is easily distracted. Have you ever allowed your imagination to daydream? How about your will? Is your will in the right place, or have you ever thought, "I really don't want to be here—I'd rather be somewhere else."

## **Temptation and Sin**

Even the saints experienced temptations during Mass. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, St. Francis de Sales, Padre Pio—all experienced this. Why not? It is the perfect place for distraction. And then there is sin. Serious sin darkens the intellect, impairs judgment, and weakens the will, and we can lose the grace the Lord wants to give us.

## **Our Humanity**

And sometimes, it is simply our humanity. How do we feel? Are we tired? Are we distracted? Are we burdened? All of this affects how we encounter the Lord at Mass.

## **Our Agendas**

And then there is one more thing: the agendas we bring with us. We come with a list—people we promised to pray for, things we want Jesus to fix, and situations we want Him to change according to our will. The problem is that our agenda can overtake the Lord's agenda.

## **The Lord's Agenda**

And His agenda is much simpler. He wants to come near to us, to explain the Scriptures so our hearts burn within us, to reveal Himself in the breaking of the bread, and to draw us into communion with Him.

## **A Spiritual Suggestion**

So here is a suggestion—try to leave your agenda outside the church. Notice the statues of our Blessed Mother surrounding the church. In each one, she stands with arms open, inviting us to give her everything we carry—our worries, our distractions, our agendas. She receives them and brings them to her Son, so that when we enter, our minds can be clear and our hearts more open to a deeper communion with Christ.

## **Final Reflection**

If we have ever wondered about our experience of Mass, let us take the counsel of the saints and turn to our Blessed Mother. Let us entrust our burdens to her. Perhaps we can think of her not only as Mary of the Assumption, but also as Mary, the Gatherer of Agendas.

## **Let Us Pray**

Through her intercession, may our hearts burn within us, and may we come to recognize our Lord in the breaking of the bread. Amen.