

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Risen Lord,

As we continue to celebrate the joy of the Easter season, this Sunday's Gospel takes us on the road to Emmaus. Like the two disciples walking away from Jerusalem, we often encounter moments where we feel downcast, overwhelmed by the events of the world, and unable to see the presence of God in our struggles.

The disciples did not recognize Jesus who was walking beside them until the breaking of the bread. This brings a vital message to us today: the Risen Lord is present in our community, even when everything seems to be falling apart. Easter is not just a past event; it is a present reality. When we gather in Jesus' name, in the Eucharist, and in service to one another, we encounter the living Christ.

As I wrote this letter, I was travelling with my brothers and sisters to Vietnam to celebrate our first memorial Mass for our loving mother. The journey home has always been a long and tiring one, but I felt different this time. As I passed through the familiar customs and streets, I wasn't just returning to a place; I was returning to the woman who first taught me how to pray. As I held the memories of my mother—her quiet strength, her unshakeable faith, and her boundless love—I realized that she is now living in me. I rejoiced in knowing that my mother is more alive now than she has ever been, safe in the presence of our Savior. I was reminded that our God is a compassionate God who walks with us each step of the way.

Celebrating the memorial Mass was one of the most challenging, yet profoundly grace-filled experiences of my life. As I held the chalice, my hands trembled, not just with the weight of sorrow, but with the weight of gratitude. I saw families, relatives, childhood friends, and members of my home parish gathered together. I also remembered Fr. Angel and many of you who will gather together at Our Lady of Grace Church for a memorial Mass of his loving mother Eusebia Rodas. Through the lens of the Eucharist, I felt a special bond, a connection between heaven and earth.

I want to thank all of you for your prayers, messages, and understanding while I was away. Your prayers and support meant a lot to me. Please continue to keep Fr. Angel's mother, my mother, and all our beloved deceased, in your prayers. Let us not allow the challenges of life to take away from us the hope of the resurrection. Just as Jesus encouraged those disciples, he walks with us now. Let us invite Jesus into our own "road to Emmaus," allowing him to turn our fears into joy and our despair into mission. May we recognize him in the breaking of the bread and be worthy witnesses of his love to all we meet.

Fr. Luke