

Good morning brothers and sisters

I'm so happy to be with you here at Palmer Memorial again, especially this Sunday in which we have come together to celebrate the sacraments and the mission that the Lord has shared with us.

Thank you to the Rev. Neil, Rev. Alex and the vestry for inviting me to preach today and share this weekend with you. The members of the Church of the Ascension in Costa Rica send their greetings of peace and hope in the resurrection of the Lord.

It has been over a year now since I was last with you all, and I am so excited to participate today on Serve Sunday.

I like the color you chose for the shirts a lot.

As bishop, I take joy in visiting different churches, meeting new people, talking with them, and hearing their stories of family and faith. I feel fed and inspired when I see and hear about how God acts in our lives in different ways, sometimes everyday things and sometimes miraculous, powerful and inexplicable to our minds and human knowledge.

One of the tasks of bishops, for me in particular, before every pastoral visit includes prayer, reflection and getting to know the context. And I can't forget to mention the preparation of the vestments. Cope, mitre, rochet, chimere, chasuble, stoles, etc. Each parish and diocese has its own customs and traditions for vestments.

Before this visit, I asked Rev. Alex about appropriate vestments for me to use today and she said: rochet and chimere.

These are not common vestments in Latin America. The last time I used them in Latin America was at an event where there were

many children. When they saw me dressed this way, some began to applaud and exclaimed: It's good to have clowns here this morning!

Although these children had already seen me many times, it was the first time they saw me wearing these clothes. Depending on how we present ourselves to others, others are able to be recognized but sometimes they are not.

This morning the gospel places us about seven miles from Jerusalem, the evening of the Resurrection day of the Lord. Two of his disciples, one named Cleopas and the other of whom we have no information, are headed for Jerusalem. Both walk confused and lamenting all the events that had happened during the week of Jesus' passion and death.

They are so confused and worried that they can not recognize Jesus who joins them and hears their cries. Scripture says that they could not recognize Him because they had a veil over their eyes.

It is not until the moment when Jesus reveals himself through the narration of the Scriptures that they can recognize him and be in his presence.

The two disciples shared a transformative message. Our hearts burned as we listened to His Word.

Personally, this passage reminds me of many moments in my ministry and the ministry of our Church in Costa Rica.

Jesus always takes the initiative and comes to us, but sometimes we can not see Him because we are more concerned in our own affairs than we are in the great signs of the building of the kingdom of God.

Jesus is always providing the Church with opportunities to reveal Himself to us. That is why it is important to remove that veil from our eyes. Not so much for us to be able to see inside our own sanctuaries, but for us to be able to focus on the mission towards the world that surrounds us.

I can attest to how the Lord takes the initiative and how I have been able to see his transforming presence.

Eight years ago we opened the doors of the Church of the Ascension to a group of 8 women who were looking for a place to rent and to store their sewing machines, with which they made their living.

We gave them a space on the second level of the building. The second level, along with the whole church building, was not in very good condition, but we decided to offer what we could to the group as a part of our ministry. Before they moved, the group spoke with us about their reality, they were carrying a heavy load. They were HIV-positive.

They sought help in many places, including churches and everyone closed their doors on them.

We did not have much to offer, other than a small space in our building. But we had the hope that through our faith we can do great things, and through the love of God, everything is transformable.

Today, out of this small beginning, these women have organized and created an official association recognized in Costa Rica as Esperanza Viva. They have 250 women, most of whom are single mothers, heads of households, and have very little income. But what they also have is an enduring spirit and steadfast values.

The women and their testimony have given the church a huge opportunity for service.

This group of ladies, Esperanza Viva, have flooded our church with blessings. Last year, they signed an agreement with the World Bank to initiate a pilot project through which they speak in public schools about HIV prevention methods. In addition, in cooperation with the Episcopal Church, they moved into a house that functions as a training center, a clinic and a micro-enterprise facility. Their lives have changed greatly thanks to the power of God.

All of this was possible simply because we opened our eyes and our doors to these women who sought our help.

The passage from the village of Emmaus tells us some very important things that happened in the lives of those two disciples. We see that Jesus is the one who takes the initiative and approaches those who follow him, and that He is always sending the Church opportunities for service.

He sends us people with different needs; Sick to be healed, people without hope to be comforted, immigrants with no place to be safe, looking for new life and expects from us, concrete and visible actions.

I always feel inspired when I see how the Lord prepares the way and the people for Mission. Three years ago, we began this relationship of companionship with Palmer Memorial and together we have been able to discover how God guides us and accompanies us along the way so that we can do mission together.

Today, we are celebrating Serve Sunday, and I am very excited to be here with you this morning and to work this afternoon at the Vita-Living House.

As the disciples said in the presence of Jesus, My heart is burning when I can join Jesus. and through his word, he inspires us to bear witness to his resurrection through concrete missionary actions.

Removing the veil from our eyes is an expression that invites the Church to have a new perspective of our work and our actions. Centralized not on itself but on mission, because in service and through service we speak of hope and restoration.

Amen.