

## Rector's Message – Sunday, April 19, 2026

### *Are You Still On The Road or On The Road Away?*

**Text: Luke 24:13-35**

*"When He was at the table with them, He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him" (Luke 24:30-31).*

This is one of the most intimate post-resurrection stories, and it maps beautifully into how spiritual experience often unfolds for us today. In this Eastertide, it is not just to mark the calendar, but to live in the reality of the purpose of whom we *walk* and *identify* with - Jesus Christ.

The setting in this gospel of Luke narrates the *walking away* of two disciples in disappointment; "on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus... talking with each other about everything that had happened." Luke 24:13-14. Cleopas and the other disciple are leaving Jerusalem. The crucifixion crushed their hope, because "We had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel." v21.

**Spiritual Parallel:** *Emmaus moments usually start when we're walking away from our faith.* Disillusionment, grief, unanswered prayer, a dream that died or never came through. We're processing all this out loud to ourselves, but momentum is away for us to see from the place of promise. It's the "*morning after*" when our *faith feels like it doesn't work after all*. That is how it is in our Emmaus moments. But Jesus meets these two disciples *on the road away*. He doesn't wait for them to return to Jerusalem first. The *Grace of God* intercepts us in our times of disorientation and disillusionment.

**The Blindness:** Jesus is present but yet "unrecognized" when He came up and walked along with them; "but they were kept from recognizing him." vs. 5-16. He's literally beside them and they don't know it. Their grief and fixed expectations act as a veil for them to see Jesus. The hardest part of dry seasons is that God often feels absent precisely when He's nearest! Our categories for understanding how He should show up keep us from seeing how He is showing up. We sometimes tell Him the story of our disappointment which He's already aware of, not realizing He's the main character we're missing. We miss Jesus' "unrecognized" presence while He is always present!

We have to realize that our spiritual formation often happens before spiritual recognition. The heart of this is that these disciples were reoriented before their eyes opened when Jesus appeared to them. "Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." v27. However, Jesus doesn't reveal Himself with a miracle first. He reframes their story through Scripture. Only then: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road?" v32.

In confusion, the move is not usually direct revelation but a slow burning. *Word, Worship, Community, Spiritual Direction* – they warm the heart before the eyes

open. The burning heart is evidence of presence even when sight is still dim. In our relationship with Him, God often explains before He reveals. Meaning precedes vision. If you're in an Emmaus season, notice what's making your heart burn, even faintly.

Jesus at the table with these disciples makes the Recognition of Him in the breaking bread. "When he was at the table with them, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him." vs. 30-31. They recognized Him in an ordinary, Eucharistic gesture which indicates to us as well that Jesus is always and ever present with us as His children in simple and ordinary times. Meals are opportunities for us to gather, share food, and share our lives. Whether we are having fast food or a family birthday meal, we have an opportunity to listen to others and hear their stories and how far they have come on their way.

And immediately He (Jesus) vanishes, after breaking the bread with them. Recognition of who Jesus is usually comes in simple, embodied moments, be it in our communion, in our shared meals, in our hospitality, in our service, in our faith, and in our acts of practicing gratitude, etc. The moment of clarity might often be brief – "he disappeared from their sight" – but it's enough to reorient everything for us when we have lost hope or faith *on our way*. We don't get to possess the vision; we get to be changed by it. We also need to recognize that the Sacraments and ordinary faithfulness are recognition points for us as believers. We don't have to despise small acts of fellowship, of breaking bread and communion or fellowship. That's where veils might seem thin, but where we might be opened to new grace and opportunities.

Finally, the return of these two disciples from despair to witness: "They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem... 'It is true! The Lord has risen'" v33-34 - Help us to see beyond our Emmaus season of disappointment, dryness, or disillusionment to faith and witness. Thus, the 7-mile walk back happens "at once," in the dark to share a new experience of what they have seen and witnessed. Their direction reverses completely -despair becomes a mission to witness.

The goal of Emmaus' encounters isn't just personal comfort. It's recommissioning. When eyes open, feet move! You go back to the very place of disappointment – Jerusalem – but now as a witness. Your story becomes someone else's hope with authentic spiritual experience which sends you back into community, not only to isolate you, but to tell your story of the risen Jesus. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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