

## Sermon Easter 3A 1014

The Road to Emmaus is the story of two unknown followers of Jesus who encounter him on Easter Day on a road leading away from Jerusalem. The story of these two followers is your story and mine, and it is the story of the Church.

Powerful, yet simple acts and events in this passage from Luke's Gospel convey the very core of our faith.

Just two friends, bewildered and perplexed trying to find a place to go when they have lost hope and don't know what to do. They talk of the terrible suffering of Jesus, his death and the unbelievable tales some women are telling that his tomb is empty. Even more some have said they have seen him alive, raised from the dead. Its all too, too much.

Emmaus was somewhere away from the scene of the crime, and perplexity. Maybe there they could escape it all, forget it, or just give up, deadening their senses and minds and maybe even their hearts.

I suspect we have all been on the "Road to Emmaus" to some degree in our lives. Bad things do happen to good people. And when it happens our faith is shaken: Faith in friends, colleagues, family, even God.

We walk along with all the other doubters, strugglers; Stumbling along a well worn path that everyone has trod at one time or another in life's journey.

But then it happens. We find companions along the way. Pilgrims like ourselves trying to figure out the ups and downs, the ins and outs, the mysteries of life. We join a community of believers gathering together, then breaking apart, and gathering again, coming together, listening and telling the stories of their experiences, sharing their memories. It is then that Jesus -- his acts - and his words - and his presence - appears in our midst.

He walks along with us, seen or unseen, the light of Christ shining to light the way to new understandings. Through the words and actions of others, or the thoughts which appear in our minds like a flip of the light switch, we are able to see what direction to take, what pathway that will lead us to the truth.

But that's not all; For when two or three are gathered in his name, Christ Jesus is in their midst. Moreover, we can sit down at table together and break

bread, and often, more than intellectual understanding, we come to see with our hearts what was right before us. The Lord is here again. The Body of Christ and the Cup of Salvation, in the form of Bread and wine at the altar, Christ has come again.

What are stories from your own life and the life of this congregation, when your eyes were opened because someone welcomed you, or because you opened your heart, your door, your life, to a stranger, someone you didn't expect to be a blessing? When you greeted them with a sign of peace, or knelt beside them at the rail, or talked over a cup of coffee around the parish hall table?

If the world of the disciples had been turned upside down by this person Jesus, think of how that same world had been "rocked" by his death. Even so, they haven't had time to absorb that calamity when new stories have sprung up. Think of times when the news, or your own life, unfolded in ways that shook the foundations of what you believed in, perhaps too fast for you to process and integrate into your understanding. What did you do to find peace and balance, and to build new foundations?

When the two friends extended hospitality to the stranger, it was them welcoming new learning he had revealed to them. Openness to new learning brings change. It makes transformation possible, especially when brought to us from the most unexpected places by the most unlikely people.

"People want to experience the divine, the sacred, the holy. They are dying for want of grace, wonder, mystery, and not for want of by-laws, committees, and sign-up lists. At least they don't want those things instead of God, says, Anthony Robinson in his book "From Generation to Generation (or not)" The experience of these two travelers (one may have been a woman, like other New Testament pairs) was fleeting, as our glimpses of God, or brushes with God's presence, are. We look back on our experiences and process them, understanding them better "in the rear view mirror" than we did face-to-face. How does God still speak to you today, not only through the encounter these early Christians had with Jesus, but through your own encounter with Jesus, in the breaking of bread, the sharing of stories, the study of Scripture? We're not just hearing/reading a story about something that happened to others, long ago and far away. It's happening here, today, in our lives, too, if we open our eyes and see, and then maybe our hearts, too, will burn within us. When

we struggle with questions of meaning and we just can't understand what's happening around us, the answer is often right before us.

Dear Friends, life's sorrows will come, but we must never let tears blind our eyes to glory; and we must never so fix our eyes on the pain, suffering, even death that we forget the profound and unimaginable joys of heaven Jesus promises. Truly.....

Christ is Risen! Alleluia, Alleluia.  
He is Risen, indeed. Alleluia, Alleluia.