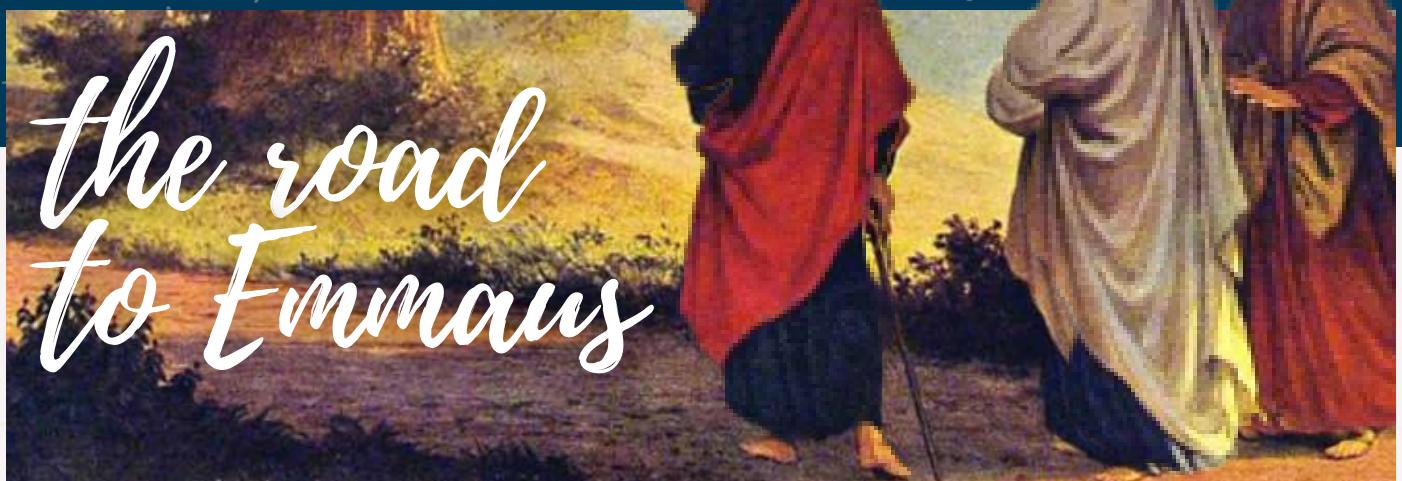




serve



This week in the Gospel we hear the account that is called "The Road to Emmaus". Two of Jesus' followers are leaving Jerusalem - probably because they think everything Christ stood for ended with his death. They were "getting out of dodge" before the trouble started and headed back to their old life, for it seemed the new life they had begun with Jesus was over. They must have felt disappointed and confused.

As they go, a stranger joins them and unpacks scripture in a way that made their "hearts burn within them". At the end of the journey, they sit down to a meal and, as the bread is broken, the stranger reveals himself to be Jesus. He then disappears from their sight and they return eagerly to rejoin the Apostles back in Jerusalem.

There are so many things to reflect upon from this account! But we want to focus on one specific aspect ; that is, how Jesus accompanied his followers. Not only did He walk with them in their physical journey to Emmaus, but He accompanied them in the spiritual journey as well. He didn't write them off because they were leaving Jerusalem and the other disciples. But instead Jesus met them where they were - in a place of uncertainty and confusion.

Jesus does the same for us. He meets us right where we are. He doesn't wait for us to be perfect to walk with us. In fact, we don't have to be anything for Jesus to want to be with us. While we are called to holiness, its not required for Jesus to love and walk with us. It's through the walking and loving that we become holy. He meets us where we are, but doesn't leave us there.

As we spend the Easter season diving deeper into SERVE, it is good to reflect on this. When serving others, do I meet them where they are or do I expect them to come to me? Do I accept people as they are or do I dismiss them until they are as I want to be? Do I leave others where they are or do I walk slowly and lovingly with them on the road to holiness?

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BY POPE FRANCIS

WALK, LISTEN, THEN TALK

Adapted from the article "Accompanying Youth and Young Adults on Their Journey as Missionary Disciples" by Julianne Stanz and Tom East

Walking with others means meeting them where they are. A large part of a person's life is centered on questions such as, "Who am I?" "What is my life's purpose?" "Who am I to others?" and "How can I contribute to society?" Authenticity and accompaniment go hand-in-hand. People are interested in making connections with their peers and forming lasting relationships. Deep pastoral listening is the starting point for accompanying young people in their journey of discipleship. Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Christophe Pierre remarks that "we are called to listen." If we are to help people discern God's plan for their lives, we might ask: what are they looking for? They are looking to be heard. The idea of accompaniment implies going to them and being with them. To this, we add listening to them. Listening is an important element of discernment. Pope Francis said: "I think that in the pastoral ministry of the Church many beautiful things are being done, many beautiful things... But there is one thing that we must do more, even the priests, even the lay people, but above all the priests must do more: the apostolate of listening: to listen!"

Maggie Melchoir, a young adult in the Diocese of Green Bay stated, "Relationships are in many ways the nexus of young adult life. Young adults are looking for connections in their life to link them to a local and broader community. Successful ministry includes natural ways for young people to meet and develop friendships." Providing mentoring opportunities for youth and young adults represents an opportunity for parish ministry. Mentoring involves not only helping people to understand the faith but to model what a lived faith looks like. In this regard, mentoring equips young people for mission. "Catechesis encourages an apprenticeship in Christian living that is based on Christ's teachings about community life. It should encourage a spirit of simplicity and humility, a special concern for the poor, particular care for the alienated, a sense of fraternal correction, common prayer, mutual forgiveness and a fraternal love that embraces all these attitudes." Guiding people to identify moments in their life when the Holy Spirit is moving helps to equip them for evangelization and for witness.