

The Road to Emmaus; God's Presence Changes Everything

Participant Handout

To participate in the activities of the reflection in a small group setting, your group leader will provide the items needed. For individual reflection outside of a group setting, please refer to the Group Leader Guidelines in your email, which includes a list of required materials.

Scripture - Gospel of Luke (24:13-35) - Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?"

Discussion Questions:

- Does God still ask us "what things?"
- If we believe that God already knows all that has happened, what difference does it make to enter into conversation with God about it?
- How has the pandemic changed your experience and image of God?

Scripture - They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him."

Discussion Questions:

- Whether it was during the pandemic or at another time in your life have you ever lost hope and are you comfortable sharing that experience with the group?
- In your experience of losing hope was it caused by a specific incident or was it so gradual and subtle that you didn't realize your hope was fading?
- Has your hope been restored?

Scripture - Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all of the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all of the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think that the disciples were not able to recognize Jesus?

Scripture - But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. 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; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”

Discussion Questions:

- How have you experienced “holy ground” during this time of the pandemic?
- Looking back on this past year, has your “heart burned” because you realized that God had been there with you every step of the way?
- What does it feel like to know that Jesus is walking with you right now?

The conclusion of the reading of the Gospel of Luke - That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Journaling and Reflection Time

Questions for the Sacred Table

Blessing with Holy Water

Conclusion

Quote by Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter; Fratelli Tutti:

“I invite everyone to renewed hope, for hope speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, independently of our circumstances and historical conditioning. Hope speaks to us of a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for a life of fulfillment, a desire to achieve great things, things that fill our heart and lift our spirit to lofty realities like truth, goodness and beauty, justice and love. Hope is bold; it can look beyond personal convenience, the petty securities and compensations which limit our horizon, and it can open us up to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile. Let us continue, then, to advance along the paths of hope.”