

LIFE AS A JOURNEY – Luke 24:13-35

Two friends were taking a long and unknown journey - full of surprises, on a dangerous and uncharted territory. They stopped from time to time, to observe, discuss, ask questions, meditate. One day, one asked a question to his friend: "What do you think is more important: the journey or the destination?" After pausing for a few moments, his friend answered: "*the company*".

On the road to Emmaus, two people are walking together. You can tell from the way they walk that they are not happy. Their bodies are bent over, their faces are downcast, their movement is slow. They do not look at each other. Once in a while they utter a word, but their words are not directed to each other. They vanish in the air as useless sounds. Although they follow the path on which they walk, they seem to have no goal. They return to their home, but their home is no longer 'home'. They simply have no other place to go. Home has become emptiness, disillusionment, despair. (The sickness of this postmodern and post-Christian culture is the incapacity to discern the presence of God. A fractured, isolated, depressed, disillusioned people).

As the two travelers walk home mourning their loss, Jesus comes up and walks by their side, but their eyes are prevented from recognizing Him. Suddenly, there are no longer two but three people walking, and everything becomes different. The journey is transformational in nature. The experience of this journey is unique, the company is singular. A journey from sadness to joy, from doubt to trust, from resentment to gratitude, from aimless travelers to people with a mission.

The third traveler walks beside us always. We are never alone. He answers our questions, attends to our crises, and He gives us the Word to mend the brokenness that we are in. But in a sense, He is asking us to take another step. He does not give us the final and last words because the journey is not over yet. The joy of this journey is endless. His presence gives sense to our whole life. Always waiting for the next step, for the next word from Him. The transformation takes place with every step we take, with every word we obey. We grow in the intimacy and communion with God. With every step we take in faith, slowly we grow and mature into the likeness of God. In walking with us, He invites us into communion with Him and equips us for the mission. He gives us a new consciousness to go and tell the others that He is alive, that He transforms lives, and transforms this journey of life.

Everything has changed. The losses no longer feel as debilitating. 'Home' is no longer an empty place. The two travellers who started their journey with downcast faces now look at each other with eyes full of new light. The Stranger who had become friend, gave them His Spirit: the divine Spirit of joy, peace, courage, hope, and love. There is no doubt in their minds: He is alive! Not alive as before, not as the fascinating preacher and healer from Nazareth, but alive as a new breath within them. Cleopas and his friend have become new people. A new heart and a new spirit have been given to them. They also have become new friends for each other – no longer people who can offer each other consolation and support as they mourn their losses, but people with a new mission. Together, they have something to say. Something important. Something urgent. Something that cannot remain hidden. Something that must be proclaimed. Thankfully, they have each other. Nobody would have believed just one of them. But when they speak together, they will get a fair hearing. The others need to know because they too had to place all their hope in Him. There are the eleven who ate with him the evening before his death; there are the disciples, women and men, who had been with him for years. They need to know what has happened to them. They need to know that it is no longer over. They need to know that He is alive and that they recognize Him when He handed the bread to them. There is no time to waste. Let's hurry! (a rendition after Henri Nouwen, - With Burning Hearts).

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