



Church of St. John the Evangelist, Elora
April 23 2023 - Third Sunday of Easter
Canon Paul Walker

You are familiar with the Elora Road. All roads lead to Elora. And in Elora of course, all

roads lead to St. John's. The Elora Road, the Emmaus Road, the Jericho Road, the Damascus Road. These roads are named after their destination. It is about where they take you. In the scriptures they are all roads of frequent travel where people are between places, in transition, heading often on foot towards a destination when something happens to them along the road. As they travel on foot, it is slow and they are vulnerable, and it is perhaps the slowness of the travel that allows them to be changed.

Cleopas and his companion encounter the resurrected Lord while travelling to Emmaus; Saul encounters the resurrected Lord while travelling to Damascus; and a Jew, who is beaten up and left half dead in the ditch while travelling on the notorious road to Jericho, receives mercy from, of all people, a Samaritan. In all cases they encounter someone who they don't seem to know, who changes how their outlook on the world.

We've all had it. Someone who has come alongside us in our journey and had the impact of changing our outlook.

On the Emmaus Road Cleopas and his companion are still overwhelmed with grief. And no wonder. It is all still so fresh as it is only the third day since the crucifixion. They've decided to get out of Jerusalem, to return to their hometown. They are downcast and sorrowful, and as they are joined by this unknown companion on their journey, he asks them a simple, important and profound question: "What are you talking about?"

"Are you the *only* person in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have taken place?"

And another brilliant question: "What things?"

Even though this unknown companion knew intimately what happened, he gives them the opportunity to express in their own words, perhaps for the first time to a "stranger," all the things that had happened. There's something so important about being able to tell the story of what happened in your own words to someone who wasn't there. "Tell me, what happened?" It forms a baseline to allow you to express your experience.

Having learned the baseline of their understanding, it appears as though Jesus upbraids them for not

getting it. “Oh how foolish and slow of heart you are.” For the rest of their journey Jesus opens up the scriptures, beginning with Moses and the prophets, to interpret all the things about himself. As they reach their destination, he goes on ahead of them, but they urge him to stay with them. They offer him hospitality. He becomes their guest.

Like Mary at the tomb, and the disciples in the upper room, they still don't recognize who this is. None of them did. No one recognizes the resurrected Jesus at first. Saul on the Damascus Road didn't recognize Jesus either. He has to ask, “Who are you?” But these two have had a long time in the presence of Jesus and they still don't see him.

Jesus enters in to their home to become their guest. After their journey they are all hungry, so they prepare some food.

It wasn't until he did what he did with the multitude in the wilderness, and with his friends in the upper room in Jerusalem at the last supper, that they recognized him. Isn't that so often the case? You can work with someone, walk with someone, journey with someone, but until you break bread with them, until they are a guest in your home, you might not know who they are. It is this action of being at table with them, in their own house, taking

the break, blessing it, breaking it and giving it to them, that the penny dropped. It is the same fourfold action that Jesus used when he fed the multitude in the wilderness and shared the passover meal in the upper room; and it is the same fourfold action that accompanies our liturgical action in communion: taking, blessing, breaking and giving the bread. When Jesus who was their guest now becomes the host they recognize him, and he vanishes.

It is evening and the day is over, and then they do the most extraordinary thing. They go outside and start the 12 km journey back to Jerusalem at night. All so they can tell the others what happened. They are so changed by this encounter with the resurrected Jesus that they are prompted to go back to tell the others about it.

We are all somewhere on the Emmaus Road: perhaps downcast and overwhelmed by all that has happened to us; or articulating in our own words all the things that happened; or breaking bread with others in the hope of becoming known. Wherever you are on that road, and it is always a slow journey, may you be changed as you break bread with others and begin to recognize the resurrected Jesus in your midst.