

Why is it that when we listen to this Road to Emmaus story, whether for the first or the fiftieth time, it grabs our attention?

Luke draws on our empathy as he describes the preoccupation of the two disciples, *“talking together about all that had happened.”* With them, we recall the horrors they had just experienced. Their faces were downcast. And to complicate matters, there were rumours that the Nazarene might have returned.

Like Cleopas and his companion, we know abandonment and disillusion. We too are challenged and are prompted to think about our priorities in life and the purpose of our existence.

Furthermore, Cleopas and his companion’s hopes had been dashed, for they expected that Jesus of Nazareth *would be the one to set Israel free*” and liberate them from their oppressors, the Romans. Like the disciples, we too have hopes and expectations that events will turn out well. Many of us have engaged in the Plenary process upon that basis. What actually happens is not always what we want, hope or pray for. Setting out on the road to Emmaus the disciples share their shattered hopes and broken dreams.

Similarly, our disillusion and disappointment with the institutional Church has gathered pace with its tepid response to the findings of the Royal Commission into the Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and sporadic efforts of our bishops in relation to the Plenary process. That Plenary question *What do*

*you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?* has triggered conversations about poor leadership in our institutional Church and the need to engage us as adults in advancing the Church's mission. There is resentment that the hierarchy fails our Church by neglecting to read the signs of the times and look to the common good.

To my mind, like the disciples on the Road to Emmaus, we need to avoid becoming preoccupied with why, what and how injuries have been perpetrated and who is to blame. That is not the way of love. We are called to freedom, joy and peace; not recrimination.

How does this story show us a way forward? Well, in relation to the disciples' retelling of what had happened over the previous three days, Christ's response was not empathetic at all. "*You foolish men!*" A "snap out of it" moment, for sure! That was followed by, "*So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?*"

Luke writes that "*starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself.*" Notice that Jesus opens the Scriptures as a whole. The pinnacle and centre of salvation history is Christ himself. It is only when we see through that lens the centrality of Christ and encounter Him and His ways

again and again through scripture, that we find ourselves renewed, revived and reignited.

Like Cleopas and his companion, we too are able to say, *“Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?”*

For me, the period between the Resurrection and Pentecost is a period of illumination and evolution. Those early Christians were challenged by the Spirit to transform from being followers to being leaders. Transformed from following, listening and learning to taking responsibility as tellers of the story.

So, Concerned Catholics Tasmania Inc are companions supporting each other, accepting responsibility and seeking to be God’s story tellers in whatever way we are called, large or small. We are looking to find ways of being authentic Church for ourselves and others and embracing and including all those who want to share their journeying with us and we with them and reaching out with words of challenge, truth and hope.

Part of accepting responsibility is taking on board the need to build relationships and structures which are consistent with Church teaching especially its social teachings of human dignity, common good, subsidiarity and solidarity.

Seeking the common good means questioning and challenging what seems out of order, unproductive or plain wrong. We are in the business of building up not pulling down. We are baptised responsible adults not children and seek to be treated that way. We are co-dependant and realise that we need to support each other and share and contribute as much or as little as we can: a few loaves and fishes can go a long way!

Please join me in the prayer on the leaflet:

Meet us, Lord, on the road to Emmaus,  
Be our constant companion  
even when we feel disheartened.  
Open our eyes, so we see the signs of  
Your presence around us.

May our hearts burn within us  
as we seek ways of being authentic Church,  
one that welcomes all  
in the spirit of the Gospels.  
Empower us to reach out with words of  
challenge, truth and love.

Amen