

If you've ever had to deal with the death of someone close to you, you know how hard it is to do anything routine for a while. It's not a good time for making decisions.

We can sympathize with the grief of the disciples who loved Jesus and followed him so closely. Within the space of a week they saw crowds honor him with palm branches and enemies condemn him to death. In their grief, the disciples denied Jesus and ran away. We criticize them, but who knows what it felt like to see the sudden, violent death of their leader and friend?

We needn't be too surprised to meet the two disciples in today's gospel walking away from Jerusalem on Easter Day. We don't know why they went to Emmaus, but surely they were disappointed by the events in Jerusalem and puzzled by the reports. They sigh, "We had hoped Jesus would be the one." When Jesus first appeared, they didn't recognize him. But he walked with them and explained the scriptures. Arriving at their destination, they asked the stranger to stay with them, and Jesus--the Word made flesh who dwelled among us--stayed that evening with them. It was when he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them that they recognized the stranger. Jesus was there in the breaking of the bread.

My brothers and sisters we often find ourselves on a road to Emmaus--confused about events in our lives, startled by things people say, depressed that what we had hoped for didn't happen, and walking in a strange place with strange people. Often we do not recognize Jesus walking with us on the road. Often the explanations we hear just don't click. But sooner or later something will fascinate us about the new place we're in; we discover Jesus there in the strangeness of it all, and we ask him to stay. Christ is present in the eucharist--when we gather together, offer our service, bear one another's burdens, proclaim our faith, hear the scriptures, and share his body and blood. We believe that Christ is truly present in the eucharist; he is also truly present in the confusion of our lives.