

Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 116:1-3, 10-17; 1 Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35

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Trinity Episcopal Church

On my first trip to the Holy Land our group had the opportunity of walking on what is believed to be the Road to Emmaus. It was a dusty road that led from a monastery we also visited. It wasn't like many of the holy sites where churches had been built on holy spots or other ways of clearly marking a spot were visible. This was just a dusty road, and the road invited us to enter into the story as we walked for a bit. There were only 12 of us on that trip, and it was an amazing part of the journey to imagine what it might have been like to walk with Cleopas and Jesus. Somehow putting my feet on that ground which may have been that Emmaus Road made the story real. I still remember that walk on the dusty road that was back in 1994. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor's guidebook of the Holy Land indicates there are possibly 4 different sites of the Road to Emmaus. Were we actually walking on the right one?

Luke's Gospel tells us that on the same day that Mary Magdalene, the other women, Peter and the other disciple found the tomb to be empty, two of the disciples were walking on the Road to Emmaus, about 7 miles from Jerusalem. They were talking about what had happened in Jerusalem. All of a sudden they were joined by Jesus, although they didn't recognize him. He wanted to know what they were talking about, and Cleopas answered, "Are

you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" (Luke 24:18). Jesus asked them, "What things," and they began to tell him all that had happened. "We had hoped he was the one to redeem Israel," one said sadly and perhaps in desperation. They were leaving Jerusalem with their hearts torn and had given up hope, and Jesus appeared to them in the midst of their distress. They didn't know it was Jesus.

In the Message translation Jesus says to them, "So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can't you simply believe all that the prophets said? Don't you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to suffer and only then enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:25-26). Then Jesus interpreted all of the stories through Scripture that were about him, beginning with Moses and the prophets. He opened their eyes to the teachings about himself. The two desperate disciples told Jesus stories, and Jesus in turn spoke to them in stories.

This feeling of hopelessness is not unique to these two disciples walking on a dusty road. We all can probably think of a time when we were feeling hopeless and sadness takes over beyond understanding. Sometimes someone comes along with a listening ear or a hug or a smile or just a touch. Someone walks along with us on the journey from hopelessness to hopefulness.

Last Thursday I had the pleasure of attending the Bishops' dinner with Confirmands at the Commons. There were close to 30 of us—a mix of confirmands and priests and confirmation facilitators. It was a great time for the confirmands to get to know the bishops and to see a very human side of them both as well as for the bishops to get to know those they would soon meet liturgically. We did a Dwelling in the Word exercise—the young people in separate groups from the adults. The lesson used was last week's story of Thomas and the disciples huddled behind closed doors. Through the scripture story we were invited to share with each other a story in our own life when we had seen the Risen Lord or had made a difference in someone's life. It was a sweet time to discover how even the simplest act of holding someone's hand can make a surprising difference in another and in us. I loved discovering new companions along my journey as we shared a little of ourselves. We were continuing to make the story come alive today.

Yesterday's *Hartford Courant* had a front-page story of a man named Luis Barrios, an undocumented father who is about to be deported to Guatemala. Luis is a sanitation worker from Derby and has been living in Connecticut for 24 years with no criminal record. He has been ordered to return to his native Guatemala next Thursday. Members of his family and his wife's have been killed in Guatemala, and he fears for his life if he has to

return. The country has been in a civil war for some 30 years in what has come to be known as the Guatemalan genocide. He left Guatemala for fear of being killed 24 years ago, and just after he left his own father was killed.

Guatemala is sometimes seen as a destination for travelers. In this country we see many handmade items from Guatemala, beautifully colored liturgical stoles, beautifully woven baskets, etc. “The website for the U.S. embassy in Guatemala notes the country has ‘one of the highest violent crime rates in Latin America.’” Luis Barrios is the sole breadwinner for his family and is described by his daughter, who is a freshman in the honors program at the University of Bridgeport, as “a loving husband and devoted father who is active in his church and his children’s schools.”

Luis is working with an immigration attorney and Rep. Rosa DeLauro and the family still has hope that Luis will be able to remain in the U.S. Luis “first came onto immigration authorities’ radar in 2011 when he was driving with a broken taillight. He has been considered a low priority for deportation and has been granted numerous stays of removal since that time.” In March of this year he was denied a stay of removal.<sup>1</sup>

There must be some feeling of hopelessness as Luis walks this dusty Emmaus road. He has companions along the way and it sounds like he’s a

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<sup>1</sup> Russell Blair, “Man Fears for Life,” *Hartford Courant*, April 29, 2017, A1, A4.

faithful man. His story opened my eyes to hopelessness and to hopefulness. I pray that those who walk closely with him will be able make a difference in his life and the lives of his family.

Part of walking on the dusty Emmaus Road is paying attention to who walks with us and being willing to listen to one another's stories. I believe Jesus appears in all sorts of ways as we're paying attention. Sometimes it's subtle. Sometimes it's a profoundly surprising way. As we're willing to share our story, it helps others discover a little more about how Jesus might be walking along with them.

The Good News is that Jesus is still present with us all these years later—walking with us and being fully present in this meal we're about to share at Table.

How might you be walking along this dusty Emmaus Road?