

EASTER 3 2026 All Souls' **Hearts burning** dtw

An Emmaus journey is something that more of us experience than we may think. The account in Luke is beautiful and reassuring, for it describes how the outward and inward movements of the searching human soul assist each other in keeping our faith grounded and deeply meaningful. The two disciples begin their hike in very poor shape with their demeanors downcast, and they are moving away from Jerusalem, in the wrong direction. Jesus enters unseen and unrecognized, as he often does. With patience and tenderness, he encourages them to tell their story. They didn't even have to look for him. *He found them* and, would you believe, he then breaks open the Word and he breaks bread, and their eyes are opened. Emmaus means: be prepared for spiritual 'wow!' moments in your life; there may be quite a few, and some in the strangest of places. With Emmaus, the penny finally drops.

The Emmaus Gospel, unique to Luke, is full of emotional twists and turns. The stranger, at first an unrecognized Jesus, allows the disillusioned disciples to give expression to their sadness, remembering what Jesus has said and done, the hopes that they had placed in him and how all this now seemed but a dream. The commentator Michael Fallon asks: 'How are they going to see that the one in whom they have placed their hopes is already walking with them, though they know it not?...They must come to know that Jesus gives meaning to our suffering lives, and that his words and deeds come from a mind and heart that know the depths of human pain and abandonment and the agony that can do nothing but cry out to God in distress. Only such a redeemer could attract us to believe. The recognition comes only 'in the breaking of the bread'...In the Breaking of Bread, Jesus' disciples *did* remember him and they renewed their promise to do what Jesus had done: to offer their bodies too and to pour out their lives, as he had done, in love for the world. Just as he was 'with them' as they walked along, so he is 'with them' as they celebrate the Eucharist'. And so, once more, he is with us here this morning in the Breaking of the Bread.

Can you think of an event or experience in your life which may at first have left you devastated or disillusioned or hopeless, that as days or weeks, or even years unfolded, took on a very different dimension in which you found meaning or purpose or a new way of seeing life? I can. I can think of many in fact, including the Staph infection I got in 2012 which put me in hospital and home nursing for over 10 weeks, followed by multiple surgeries. (It blew my right hip away along with many ligaments) Over the next 2 years I only worked a cumulative time of 12 months and was off work for the same amount of time. I experienced temporary chronic fatigue due to the acute infection. But I also experienced new awareness of life, love and creation. As one big door had closed on me, wonderfully, another opened. I remember Deborah taking me to a beautiful quiet B&B in the country where we enjoyed such quality time (6 days), beautiful scenery, and I read some special books. Family and friends loomed much larger in my heart and soul. Human engagement and conversation became more sacred. As with Emmaus, I

could feel the presence of Christ, with the forlorn disciples, bringing me back from death to life again, finding myself rejoicing in a new and deepening sense of being and belonging as if I had been 'brought home'. I reflected in wonder, at how what was once a barrier had paradoxically become a bridge, a cross which I had taken up through to a kind of personal resurrection.

As we reflect on the suffering and the glory of the Emmaus experience, we realise that our lives, if we are honest, live constantly in this mysterious tension. I believe that this mystery lies also at the heart of what many Australians feel deeply around Anzac Day, which is just 6 days away. It is carved in our national psyche. Is it any wonder that our hearts burn deep within us as we hear those amazing stories of great sacrifice? Lest we Forget.

People who take part in the *Cursillo* experience (Spanish for Short Course) three days of Christian faith-learning, go on what is termed an *Emmaus Walk* in pairs together. It is an opportunity to share with each other some of the things they have learned during that time, new awakenings perhaps, self-discovery, fresh insights. The long walk in Spain known as the *Camino de Santiago* is life-changing for so many pilgrims who make the full journey or just part of it; It takes 30-35 days if you do the full 800 kms. I know some people who have made that sacred pilgrimage; perhaps you do too. Martin Sheen starred in a poignant movie on the Camino called *The Way*. It is said that travellers pass over the land; pilgrims let the land pass through them – that is also how our first nations people feel about this ancient land. May our hearts burn within us as we walk together in Emmaus Dreamtime Reconciliation.

Emmaus means being open to a new way of looking at life and allowing life and God to take a new look at you, *pass through* you. Emmaus means being surprised by joy in the strangest of places. Emmaus is a bit like that Cadbury commercial where the servo check-out girl sees the block of chocolate left on the counter and frantically taps of the window yelling out, "You forget this!" only for the man to smile back at her and get in his car leaving it right there. She gets on the microphone with a smile, "Love you Dad!" What special things might God be leaving behind for you in your life? There's an Emmaus and a half in everyone.

Let us pray:

Elusive God, companion on the way, you walk behind, beside, beyond; you catch us unawares. Break through the disillusionment and despair that sometimes clouds our vision, that with wide-eyed wonder, we may find our way, and journey on as messengers of your good news, more precious than gold. Amen