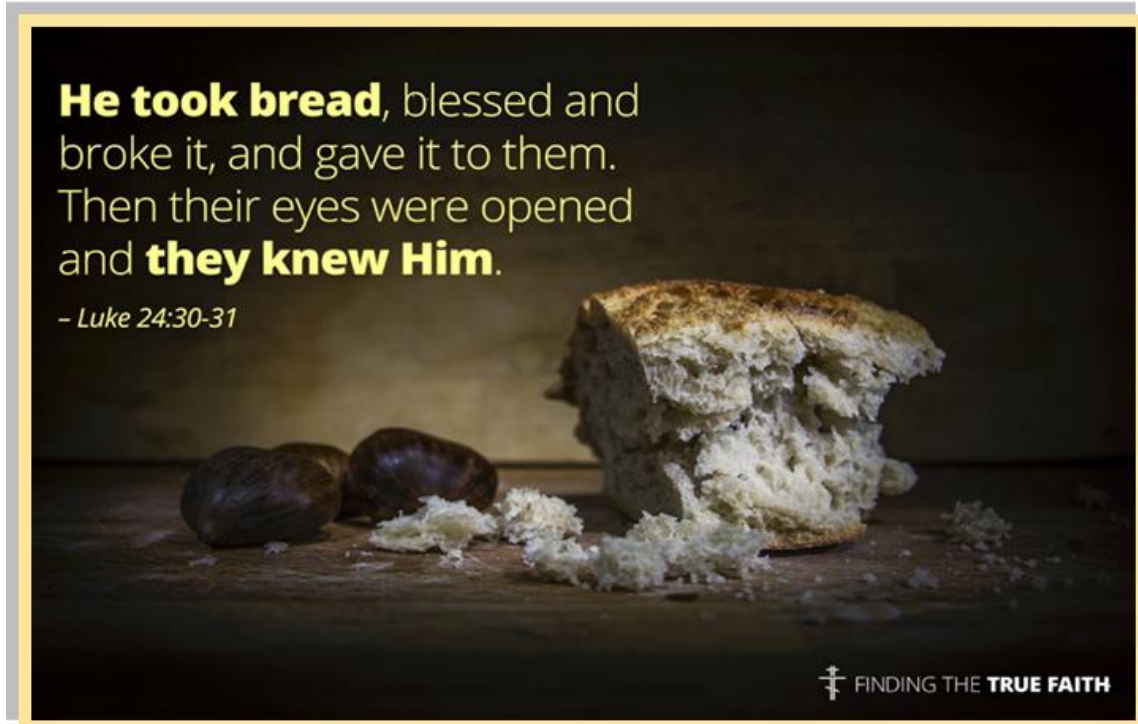


**JOURNEY TO EMMAUS
RECOGNIZING JESUS in the BREAKING OF BREAD**

(Luke 24:13-35)



2021 has been dedicated by our Bishops' Conference as the **Year of the Eucharist**. We are still in lockdown and we don't know how much longer we will remain in this situation. No-one can predict when life will return to 'normal' or a 'new normal', so it is essential that we use all our creativity in accompanying our catechists as best we can.

THE ENCOUNTER OF THE TWO DISCIPLES WITH JESUS ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS (Luke 24:13-35)

These few reflections on the events experienced by the Disciples of Emmaus might be helpful for catechists. Use them in any way you think could be most useful.

1. Our Journey of Life and Faith

On our journey of life, all our experiences have a meaning and purpose. Hopefully we learn from the positive and challenging events that bring about greater growth in goodness and joy.

- ★ Amid all the negative aspects that our experience of Covid-19 and the lockdown have brought us, think about some positive elements that have emerged and changed the way we see life.

- ★ Among the many challenges we have had to face which were those who brought about a greater and deeper spiritual growth.

2. Our Living Encounter with Christ

For many months of last year and in the beginning of this year we experienced the pain of not being able to participate in the Eucharist, which for most of us is a very special moment of communion and intimacy with Jesus.

- ★ How has being deprived of Holy Mass and the reception of Holy Communion affected our spiritual lives.
- ★ What have we learned from this experience?

As catechists we have to be the first to build up a strong personal relationship with Jesus if we wish to influence the lives of those whom we catechize.

It might be good, in this Year of the Eucharist, to memorize and take to heart that the whole purpose or aim of catechesis is to **bring others to an encounter with Jesus.....**“to put people not only in *touch* but in *communion*, in *intimacy*, with Jesus Christ.

Only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity. (2020 Directory for Catechesis # 75)

3. The Encounter with Jesus of the Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus

When the ‘stranger’ joined them, they did not know that they were encountering the Risen Jesus. They were *too wrapped up in their own sorrows and concerns* to be aware of who the stranger walking with them, was.

- ★ The same happens to us. We become so wrapped up in our own problems and difficulties that we are unable to recognise the presence of Jesus in all the circumstances of our lives.
- ★ Growing in ‘communion and intimacy’ with Jesus takes *time, faith and life experience*.
- ★ Along the way Jesus breaks open the Word and explains that what had happened to Jesus had been foretold long ago in Scripture.

Today, too, the Risen Jesus sends us, as catechists, to break open the Word of God and to explain the meaning of that Word in our lives.

All catechesis flows from the Word of God.

“Through preaching and catechesis the Holy Spirit himself teaches, generating an encounter with the Word of God, living and effective.”

The main source of Catechesis is the Word of God. (Directory for Catechesis #91)

4. The Disciples Recognize Jesus in the Breaking of the Bread

Finally, as the two disciples and Jesus sat at table, their eyes were opened as Jesus ‘broke the bread’ with them and they recognized Jesus.

- ★ There are many occasions when we encounter the living Jesus, but ultimately it is in the gift of the Eucharist that we recognize Jesus and are given the opportunity for communion and intimacy with Him. This special encounter with Jesus “finds its source and summit in the celebration of the Eucharist [...] (2020 Directory for Catechesis # 98)
- ★ For this reason, it is the responsibility of the catechist throughout all the years of catechetical formation of children and young people to instil a deep love and respect for Jesus present in the Eucharist and to cultivate a special devotion that includes our Catholic tradition of Adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. A simple way in which children can be taught this is through the way in which we genuflect when we come into church.
- ★ All our catechesis and not only preparation for the Sacraments of Christian Initiation is “intrinsically (essentially) linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity” because it is especially in the Eucharist that Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of the person. (2020 Directory for Catechesis #96)

5. Jesus the Catechist

Recognizing Jesus is key to all our catechetical activity.

In the Emmaus story, Jesus shows us how to develop these personal relationships. And in the story we find four important catechetical methods that Jesus – the Master Catechist – demonstrates.

1. Jesus shows interest, listens and facilitates dialogue

- ★ Jesus does not immediately reveal his presence but focuses on what the disciples are thinking and feeling. He shows interest in them, listens and engages with them in a dialogue.
- ★ The catechist is also a good listener and facilitates dialogue with those being catechised.

2. Jesus teaches beginning with the Word of God

- ★ After listening to his disciples, Jesus begins to teach starting with the Hebrew Scriptures.
- ★ He links this to their experience and gradually develops their knowledge and awareness.
- ★ Jesus did not teach by means of abstract concepts, rather, he tells stories and uses parables based on the experience of his listeners.

- ★ The latest General Directory for Catechesis which becomes the guide for every catechist speaks about catechesis as a “laboratory” of dialogue. Catechesis should strive to emphasise this style of dialogue in order to “make more easily visible the face of the Son”. (2020 Directory for Catechesis #54)

3. Jesus fosters kind and caring relationships

- ★ As understanding expanded, the disciples admit that their “hearts were burning” within them as Jesus spoke to them along the way. They invite the ‘stranger’ to stay with them. Jesus fosters loving relationships between people and encourages communion and community.
- ★ “The faith is professed, celebrated, expressed, and lived above all in community.” “Catechesis, in reference to preparation for community life, therefore has the task of developing a sense of belonging to the Church.” (2020 Directory for Catechesis #88-89)
- ★ It may be a bit more problematic during these times of restrictions and lockdown to build a sense of community and belonging, but catechists are urged to become more pro-active and creative as these new situations now need new solutions.

4. Jesus provides the opportunity for the two disciples to experience the message and the chance to share it with others

- ★ When Jesus leads the disciples into the experience – the breaking of the bread – they recognize him. This causes great joy and the felt need to hurry back to Jerusalem so as to share their experience with the others.
- ★ Catechists are called to provide opportunities for those they catechize to express in various and creative ways what they have experienced.
- ★ “Human experience is integral [essential] to catechesis, in its identity, and process and also in content and method, because it is not only the place in which the word of God is proclaimed but also the space in which God speaks.” (2020 Directory for Catechesis #197)