**Luke 24.13-35 The Road to Emmaus**

I have a colleague in this diocese who has an inspiring story to tell – not unlike the story we read in today’s Gospel reading.

My friend has been in ministry since women were first ordained in this diocese, back in 1991. After many years of serving as a priest, she found herself in a place where she was feeling pretty ‘bleagh’ about the whole ministry thing. – You’ve seen that ad on TV, haven’t you? About feeling ‘Bleagh’? The ad is about one’s internal plumbing, but it could be equally descriptive of one’s spiritual state – well that was my friend.

She had taken long service leave, and was on a tour in Europe. She tells of how the tour went to one of the famous Cathedrals – can’t remember which one – and at the cathedral, workers were repairing some of the frescos. She was allowed to climb a ladder which took her right up to the face of a huge fresco of Jesus. As she climbed the last rung she could manage, she looked up right into the face of Jesus, barely a metre from her own. It took her breath away, and she exclaimed – “Oh my God” – and then she was suddenly aware of Jesus’ presence in a way she had never known before – and she breathed the same words again, but this time totally infused with worship, “Oh…my God….” That encounter with Jesus changed her life and her ministry forever.

Some people seek encounters such as this – others might feel they’re unnecessary. However, regardless of what we might think about encounters such as this, we all need to make sure that we never settle for mediocrity in our spiritual lives.

Our God is a God who wants us to know him. He has given us the Holy Spirit whose task it is to reveal Jesus to us. But it’s remarkably easy to settle back and become comfortable in our relationship with God – so comfortable, in fact, that metaphorically speaking, we don’t much feel like getting out of the chair. And that’s not such a good place to be - because when we stagnate, we don’t grow.

As we look at briefly the reading today, there are three things which, if we take into our own walk with God, can fan the flame and lead to another degree of transformation in our lives. Paul said this to the church in Corinth: “All of us, then, reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; and that same glory, coming from the Lord, who is the Spirit, transforms us into his likeness in an ever greater degree of glory. ”

God really does want us to be transformed to become more like him. It happens little by little and it’s a process that we must actually engage with. It doesn’t happen on its own.

In this story, we find two disciples walking the ten kilometres between Jerusalem and a town called Emmaus, probably early in the afternoon. The conversation was centred on the events surrounding the crucifixion – especially now there had been reports from the women who followed Jesus that they had seen him alive that morning.

Then in v15, we read this: “As they talked and discussed, Jesus himself drew near and walked along with them; they saw him, but somehow did not recognize him. Jesus said to them, "What are you talking about to each other, as you walk along?" They stood still, with sad faces.

They then answered Jesus’ question, filling him in, so they thought, about the events of the past few days. Though they didn’t recognise Jesus at that moment, they were open with him. They voiced their sorrow and their disillusionment in the Messiah. “We hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel…” they said.

It’s here that we gain our first insight into something that will help us move forward in our own walk with God. It’s so simple, we sometimes miss it. **It’s being willing to open ourselves to God and articulate to him what we’re feeling; i.e. what we’re feeling about life, relationships, church, our hopes and dreams, our fears and concerns – even what we’re feeling about him.** We need to get real with God. No pretence, no masks.

What I sometimes hear from people as I visit and talk with them is that while they will pray for other people, often long and fervently, they are reluctant to pray for themselves. There seems to be a perception that is somehow selfish to pray for oneself, and that God wouldn’t approve. That perhaps there is even a quota when it comes to answers to prayer, and that other people are in far more need of God’s intervention. Someone once said to me when I asked if they’d prayed about a particular problem, “Oh I don’t bother God with my little problems. There are so many other people out there who need his help…”

In this story we see that it’s as these two disciples were willing to bare their souls – to voice their feelings, talk about their issues - that Jesus actually drew alongside them and talked with them. He met them where they were up to in their understanding, and moved them forward.

That’s the first thing that will help us experience transformation. **It’s being willing to open ourselves up to God and articulate what we’re feeling about our own lives; to be honest with him.** There’s little point in being otherwise – God sees right into our hearts doesn’t he? It’s as we take the time to come before God and bare our souls before him, that we become aware Jesus has drawn alongside us, and we become open to him working in us.

The second thing we see in this passage, is that **as the disciples listened to Jesus – he revealed himself to them!**

If we look at v16, we find in the NRSV translation, that the disciples were actually *kept* from recognising Jesus to start off with. That sounds odd, doesn’t it? You’d think Jesus would want them to recognise him as soon as they saw him.

However, I suspect that if the two disciples had recognised Jesus right away, it would have been rather difficult for them to contain themselves, and listen attentively to the in depth instruction from the Scriptures that Jesus wanted to share with them.

We read in v 27: “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, Jesus explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”

In revealing himself to his disciples this way, they were given a solid grounding in the theology of Christ’s death and resurrection, which would become the foundational teaching of the new Christian Church – the same teaching that our beliefs centre on to this day.

But Jesus took them further. In v30-32 we read: Jesus sat down to eat with them, took the bread, and said the blessing; then he broke the bread and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. They said to each other, "Wasn't it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?"

When we are willing to come before God, and bare our souls before him, he reveals himself to us. He will not only teach us what we need to know – he will open our eyes to who he is. That was my friend’s experience.

It was also mine. I know I have shared this with you before, but it’s relevant. Like my friend, I also went through a ‘bleagh’ time in my Christian walk. It changed for me, when, like the guys on the Emmaus road, I met with a friend, and together we came before God. We decided to explore prayer together, and started by listening to short devotional messages on tape. We’d then just sit in silence, waiting on God. Gradually, we became more attuned to his presence, and we began to glimpse his ‘God-ness’ – his holiness, his love, his power. It was awesome in the true sense of the word. And it was transformational! It fanned the flame in both of us and I can really relate to v. 32 when the disciples said, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

It’s when we encounter Jesus, and he reveals himself to us, that a third thing happens. **We find ourselves telling others about Jesus.** We just can’t help ourselves. We don’t tell others about Jesus *in order* for God to transform us – we do it because we ARE transformed. It’s an outcome of Jesus revealing himself to us. In v33, we find, “That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.”

These two guys had just walked ten kilometres. That’s from Narooma to the Mystery Bay turn off! It probably would have taken the best part of 3 hours. What did they do – as soon as they recognised Jesus? They turned around and went all the way back – despite the darkness, despite their weariness. They had a message they just couldn’t wait to share!

So to recap – This story of the encounter on the road to Emmaus has a message for us today. It shows us that if we are willing to come before God and be honest with him, bare our souls before him, telling him our hopes and dreams and disappointments – **that Jesus draws alongside us and hears us.**

Secondly, it shows us that as we open ourselves to Jesus and **listen to him,** he reveals himself to us. He reveals himself to us in prayer, through Bible study, through church, through books, through the wonder of creation…. If we’re tuned in to him, we will hear him.

And lastly, this story shows us that as Jesus reveals himself to us, it will not be something we can keep to ourselves – we will want to share him with the world!

How comfortable are we today? If it has been some time since we have ‘got out of the chair’, then perhaps it is time to take a walk with Jesus, unburden ourselves to him, and listen to what he has to say to us. As we do this, we’ll find that transformation will be taking place.

Let’s pray.