



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** Wednesday, 24 May

2017 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good Morning!*

Today, I would like to reflect on the experience of the two disciples of Emmaus, narrated in the Gospel of Luke (cf. 24:13-25). Let us imagine the scene: two men are walking; disappointed, sad, convinced that they are leaving behind them the bitterness of an event which ended badly. Before that Easter, they had been full of enthusiasm, convinced that those days would be decisive: their expectations met as well as the hopes of all the people. Jesus, to whom they had entrusted their lives, had seemed to arrive at the final battle. He would now manifest his power, after a long period of preparation and concealment. This is what they were expecting. And it was not to be.

The two pilgrims had been nurturing a uniquely human hope which was now falling to pieces. That Cross raised on Calvary was the most eloquent sign of a defeat which they had not foreseen. If that Jesus was truly in accordance with God's heart, then they had to conclude that God was unarmed, defenceless in the hands of violent people, unable to offer any resistance to evil.

So on that Sunday morning, these two men flee from Jerusalem. They still envision the events of the Passion, the death of Jesus unfold, and their souls bear the painful torment of those events during Saturday's forced repose. That Easter, which should have inspired a song of liberation, has instead transformed into the most painful day of their lives. They leave Jerusalem to go elsewhere, to a tranquil village. They look like people who are intent on removing a burning memory. They are thus on the road, walking in sadness. This scenario — the road — had already been important in the Gospel narratives. It will now become increasingly more important, at the moment in which the history of the Church begins to be told.

Jesus' encounter with those two disciples appears to be completely fortuitous. It seems to be one of those chance meetings that happen in life. The two disciples are walking, deep in thought, and a stranger comes up alongside them. It is Jesus, but their eyes are not able to recognize him. And therefore, Jesus begins his "therapy of hope". What takes place on this road is a therapy of hope.

Who administers it? Jesus.

Firstly, He asks and listens. Our God is not an intrusive God. Even though he knows the reason for the disappointment of those two men, he gives them time to be able to deeply fathom the bitterness which has overcome them. Out of this comes a confession that is a refrain in human existence. "*We had hoped, but... We had hoped, but...*" (v. 21). How much sadness, how many defeats, how many failures there are in the lives of every person! Deep down, we are all a little like those two disciples. How many times we have hoped in our lives. How many times we have felt like we were one step away from happiness only to find ourselves knocked to the ground, disappointed. But, Jesus walks with all people who, discouraged, walk with their heads hung low. And walking with them in a discrete manner, he is able to restore hope.

Jesus speaks to them, above all through *the Scriptures*. Those who take up God's Book will not encounter easy heroism, fierce campaigns of conquest. True hope never comes cheaply. It always undergoes defeat. The hope of those who do not suffer is perhaps not even [hope]. God does not like to be loved as one would love a ruler who leads his people to victory, annihilating his enemies in a bloodbath. Our God is a faint light burning on a cold and windy day, and as fragile as his presence in this world may appear, he has chosen the place that we all disdain.

Jesus then repeats for the disciples the fundamental gesture of every Eucharist. He takes bread, blesses it, breaks it and gives it. Does not Jesus' entire history perhaps lie in this series of gestures? And is there not in every Eucharist, also the symbol of what the Church should be? Jesus takes us, blesses us, "breaks" our life — because there is no love without sacrifice — and offers it to others; he offers it to everyone.

Jesus' encounter with the two disciples of Emmaus is a fleeting one. But the entire destiny of the Church is contained within it. It tells us that the Christian community is not enclosed within a fortified citadel, but rather journeys along its most essential environment, which is the road. And there, it encounters people with their hopes and disappointments, burdensome at times. The Church listens to everyone's stories as they emerge from the treasure chest of personal conscience, in order to then offer the Word of Life, the witness of love, a love that is faithful until the end. And thus, the hearts of people reignite with hope.

We have all had difficult moments in life, dark moments in which we walked in sadness, pensive, without horizons, with only a wall before us. And Jesus is always beside us to give us hope, to warm our hearts and to say: "Go ahead, I am with you. Go ahead". The secret of the road that leads to Emmaus is simply this: despite appearances to the contrary, we continue to be loved and God will never stop loving us. God will walk with us always, always, even in the most painful moments, even in the worst moments, even in moments of defeat. That is where the Lord is. And this is our hope. Let us go forward with this hope! Because he is beside us and walks with us. Always!

Special greetings:

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly the groups from England, Hong Kong, India, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Guam, Zimbabwe, Canada and the United States of America. In the joy of the Risen Christ, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. Today, I wish to greet especially the pilgrims from Hong Kong as they celebrate Our Lady of Sheshan. May the Lord bless you all!

I welcome the Italian-speaking pilgrims. On the eve of the Solemnity of the Lord's Ascension, may this visit to the Eternal City reawaken your faith and bolster renewed commitment to charity and solidarity.

I address a special greeting to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Today we celebrate the feast day of Mary Help of Christians. Dear *young people*, learn to love at the school of the Mother of Jesus. Dear *sick people*, in your suffering, ask for the heavenly intercession of the Blessed Virgin by praying the Rosary. And you *newlyweds*, like Our Lady, may you always know how to listen to God's will for your family.