**PILGRIMS OF HOPE: REFLECTION FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT**

**PILGRIMS OF HOPE ON A SYNODAL JOURNEY**

**OPENING PRAYER**

Hope is our calling, O Lord, and the destination of our pilgrim journeys. As we mark this Jubilee Year of hope, keep our eyes focused on Jesus, and on the hope he reveals to us. All our hope is in you, O God, in the name of Jesus our Lord and companion. Amen.

**READING FOR REFLECTION**

**Luke 24: 13 – 35**

On the first day of the week, two of the disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about eleven kilometres from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him. Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So, he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the Scriptures to us?” That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. These 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.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

* Was there a time in your life when you had a moment of enlightenment, when your heart burned, when a light went on for you and you saw things in a new or clearer way? What was it and what did you learn from this experience?
* When have you felt depressed or disappointed like the disciples on the road? Did you experience Jesus walking with you on your journey? If so, how did you feel after you recognized Jesus?
* The two disciples on the road encounter Jesus who walks with them and opens up the scriptures for them. How would you characterize this encounter?
* How were they changed by the encounter?
* Think of a time in your life when you journeyed with another person and how that experience changed you in some way.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT PILGRIMAGE**

**A journey of hope.** “This interplay of hope and patience makes us see clearly that the Christian life is a journey calling for moments of greater intensity to encourage and sustain hope as the constant companion that guides our steps towards the goal of our encounter with the Lord Jesus.” (Spes Non Confundit,5)

**Pilgrimage** Jubilee years are a time of pilgrimage. The word pilgrimage denotes a deeply transformational and spiritual journey, a setting out into strange territory in response to a call. For many, a pilgrimage is a journey to a holy place. It’s also a time to set aside to notice our surroundings and thank God for blessings God has given us. The jubilee calls for us to set out on a journey and to cross boundaries. When we travel, we do not only change place physically, but we also change ourselves. Hence, it is important to prepare ourselves well, to plan the route, and learn about the destination. In this sense, the Jubilee pilgrimage

begins before the start of the journey itself: the starting point is the decision to set out.

**Abraham is the Old Testament’s archetypal pilgrim**, described as the ‘wandering Aramean’ because he heard God’s call, left his familiar homeland and set out in the hope of receiving God’s promises (Deut 26:5).

**Jesus’ ministry can also be seen as a journey**, from Galilee to the Holy City of Jerusalem … Christ himself calls His disciples to walk this road, and even today Christians are those who follow him and set out after Him.

**The pilgrimage**. The journey takes place gradually: there are various routes to choose from and places to discover; it is made up of particular sets of circumstances, moments of catechesis, sacred rites and liturgies. Along the way our traveling companions enrich us with new ways of understanding things and fresh perspectives. Contemplation of creation is also part of the journey and helps us to realize that care for creation “is an essential expression of our faith in God and our obedience to his will” (Pope Francis, Letter for the Jubilee 2025). Pilgrimage is an experience of conversion, of transforming one's very being to conform it to the holiness of God. During the pilgrimage, one also shares in the experience of those who, for various reasons, are forced to leave their homelands to seek a better life for themselves and their family.

**Pilgrimage Sites in the Diocese of London**

There will be eight pilgrimage sites in the Diocese of London for the Jubilee. The specific dates these locations will be welcoming us with activities for pilgrims will be released soon. The Jubilee Committee, the hosting Families of Parishes and Shrine leaders are pleased to announce the following locations:

* St. Peter’s Cathedral Basilica, London
* Our Lady of Mercy, Sarnia
* Our Lady of the Assumption, Windsor
* St. Joseph’s, Stratford
* St. Peter’s, Goderich
* St. Joseph’s, Chatham
* Sacred Heart Parish, Ingersoll
* Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary, Merlin

**LEARN MORE REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

In anticipation of a pilgrimage you will make this Jubilee Year, here are some reflection questions for you to ponder.

* Does the idea that setting out on a journey is akin to our human quest for meaning resonate with you? If so, how?
* In your life, have you experienced such a journey?
* Think of a special place you have visited. Now think of going to that place through the lens of pilgrimage, answering the following questions:
	+ What about your special place encouraged you to rediscover “the value of silence, effort and the simplicity of life”?
	+ What features of your special place encouraged you to “contemplate the beauty of creation”?
	+ How did you, or someone else, “prepare yourselves well, plan the route, and learn about the destination”?
	+ Who travelled with you? How did these travelling companions “enrich (you) with new ways of understanding things and fresh perspectives”?
	+ Did your journey to a special place change you in any way? In what way(s) was it an “experience of conversion”?

**CALL TO ACTION**

* Gather a group of parishioners and make a pilgrimage from your parish to another sacred place in your town or area (cathedral, co-cathedral, historic cemetery, shrine). - Take turns praying the decades of the Rosary. - Consider those who have gone before you who worked to establish your parish community. How can we remember them more concretely?
* How might your parish community enter into a pilgrimage experience and allow it to be an experience of conversion, of transforming one’s very being to conform to the holiness of God?
* Create a pilgrimage journey in nature to reflect on the environment as God’s creation. Establish a set distance (5 or 10 km). Walk it in one session or over a period of days. - Journal about your experience and what you noticed about nature, about how your community cares for the environment, the impact of development on the land.