

## *“Your spiritual guide”*

March 2008

Hymn                      We meet you, O Christ                      VU 183

Scripture                      Mark 16: 8 - 16

Verses 10 – 11, ‘She went out and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.’

Prayer                      Let us pray – God of resurrection, you have rolled the stone away and the tomb of our world has been opened wide. With the dawn has come a new creation. Let our celebration today empty our tombs, renew our lives, and release your power, through the risen Christ we pray. Amen.

Lesson                      Two young men are hurrying away from a city where a friend, another youth, has just met a violent death. They are grief-stricken and in shock. Unable to comprehend what has happened and fearful for their own safety, they have decided to run away, just as any of us might do when confronted with pain and confusion. They go over the incident again and again in their own minds and in their frantic conversation.

Suddenly they are joined by a mysterious stranger who asks what is upsetting them. The men come to a stop in astonishment that someone might not share their troubles, but the stranger proves a good listener. He allows them to tell their story and express their feelings without interruption, and then he interprets it for them so that they begin to see the meaning of the terrible event they have witnessed. So helpful is this stranger that when he tries to move on they plead with him to stay. After spending further time and sharing a meal with him, the two men resolve to abandon their flight and return to the city. Their earlier decision to run away now seems misguided.

As Christians, we recognize the story of the encounter of the disciples with the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus. It is also one of the classic texts on spiritual direction. The stranger is a model guide who walks alongside the men without imposing his presence on them. He listens more than he speaks. He empathizes with them, taking their pain seriously, but shows how it can have inner meaning that is greater than the hurt it inflicts.

It is important, however, not to dwell too much on the suffering of the individuals in the story. The point is that they have come to a crisis in their spiritual lives and do not know which way to turn. The stranger gently helps them to discover the way for themselves.

The word crisis, rather than suggesting some kind of disaster, originally referred to the need to make a judgment concerning taking one course of action or another. The decision to take our spiritual lives seriously is a kind of crisis, in that sense, and one for which we might feel the need for guidance. The principal guide is the Holy Spirit acting upon us and acting within us, but at some stage we might want to have a “stranger” to speak with.

Prepare yourself. Be ready. At some stage you may need to listen to the “stranger”. At some stage you may need to be the “stranger” for someone else.

Discussion    Talk about the empty tomb.  
What is different in your thinking of Jesus as a resurrected being?

Prayer        Let us pray – Eternal God, you call us to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go in courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us, and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

*This meditation is based in part on material from “Vacations for the Spirit” by Alan Walker*

**Coming events    Central Region Roundup    25 – 27 April, 2008        Jackson’s Point, Ontario**

**Book of the month        The gospel according to Mark – ‘relive’ Jesus’ life on earth**