The disciples on the road to Emmaus were going through the most difficult and painful transitions in their life. The death of their Master and Lord had a debilitating effect on them. They were deeply grieving and did not know how to cope with their new life situation. They felt discouraged, confused and afraid. Their friends and colleagues hid behind closed doors for fear of the Jews. The two disciples in our story decided to leave town altogether.

Nearly 30 years ago my father died. I was just ordained a priest for 6 months. The longest and most painful walk one will ever undertake is away from the grave of someone you love. I came home and closed the doors, and lied down. As Geoff Thomas put it:

To walk away and feel as if the world has come to an end. To walk away and think about what used to be, and what might have been. To walk away and realize, “I'll never be the same again.” To play over and over in your mind the good times, the laughter, the fun stories, to reach out and touch a face and find it gone forever. To cry until you can't cry any more. To watch them bury your dreams and hopes and all that was good about life. To know it’s over, done, finished, the end, and there is nothing you can do about it. To walk away to friends who cannot understand and to a world that cares little. It is the longest walk and the saddest day. Every step takes you away from the tombstone of a broken dream.

“Is there a tomb in your life that you've had to walk away from?” “It doesn't have to be the death of a loved one. It could be a relationship, a dream, a job you lost, or a disease that left you unable to do the things you used to do. It can a pandemic, covid 19, the corona virus that has changed your life, your dreams, your jobs or even your loved ones for ever.

The disciples had walked from all of it—the death of a loved one, a relationship, a dream, and a job and, yes, from everything that mattered in their lives. Down the road two people walked, crestfallen and wanting to put the events of recent days behind them. They talked, they argued about the things that had taken place. In to this chaos, into this sorrow and pain, Jesus came to them unexpected and cast a new light on their human situation.

The road to Emmaus is built solidly on Sacred Scripture. That makes the road to Emmaus sacred. It is around 7 miles, takes 3 hours, and so the Road to Emmaus is 3 hours of heart to heart conversation with Jesus. Jesus speaks directly to the crestfallen disciples. “Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures” (Luke 24:27). Their hearts were burning as He spoke to them.
Our God is an awesome God. The God of the resurrection is a loving and forgiving God. God comes to us in our own personal life situations. Some people believe we have to clean up our lives before we come to the Lord. That is not the case. Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman at the well, someone who lived in an illicit relationship and who carried the baggage of five failed marriages. In their encounter, Jesus addresses her situation and offers her salvation. To the woman caught in adultery, Jesus offers protection from the religious powers who concluded that she should be put to death. Instead, He offers forgiveness and mercy, sending her off with the words, “Sin no more.” Even to his disciples who had failed miserably, He offered love and compassion and “grace upon grace” to be restored to fullness of discipleship.

The most important thing that can happen to a person is to encounter Jesus, who loves us, who has saved us, who gave his life for us. The most important thing that can happen to you and me is to encounter God when we are at our lowest, our worst.

“Are you struggling with something in your life?” Are you troubled by the way your life is going? Are you suffering because of what people are thinking and talking about you?

You need to get on the road to Emmaus, and the road to Emmaus is built solidly on sacred Scripture, God’s word. The road to Emmaus is a heart to heart conversation with Jesus for hours.

The tragedy of modern times is that we have lost our gift of attention. In her classic, “The Mockingbirds,” Mary Oliver talks about an impoverished couple who opened their doors to strangers and had nothing to give except their willingness to be attentive. The strangers turned out to be gods. For this alone, for their gift of attentiveness, the gods loved them, says Mary Oliver, and they blessed them when they rose out of their mortal bodies. “Like a million particles of water from a fountain, the light swept into all the corners of the cottage, and the old couple, shaken with understanding, bowed down.”

Get down on the Road to Emmaus, with Word of God in our hands, with finest gift of our attention. When we listen attentively, God lights up all the corners of our lives, and a new understanding takes over our hearts and minds. Meet our awesome God.