



# *Called to Follow in Christ's Footsteps*

# SESSION 1



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*Where two or three are gathered in my name,  
I am there among them."*

Matthew 18:20



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*Stay with us, Lord!"*

Cf. Luke 24:29

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## ***Focus for this Session***

- Seeing life's journey through the eyes of faith
- Christ walks with us
- Using our gifts for the good of the community
- Journey with Christ to "Jerusalem"



## **GATHER**

### **Introductions**

*Allow a few moments for everyone to share a little about their life since the end of Season Two. For those joining the group for the first time, allow them a few moments to introduce themselves, and to share how they became interested in joining the **ARISE Together in Christ** process.*

### **Opening Prayer**

*Leader* As we gather for our first meeting of Season Three of **ARISE Together in Christ**, let us spend a moment of quiet in order to become more aware of God's presence ...  
... God's presence in each of us and in the community.

*One of the members reads the following prayer:*

Good and gracious God,  
you accompany us with love  
as we journey through life.  
You sent us your Son, to share our journey.  
He is the way that leads us back to you,  
the truth that sets us free,  
the life that makes our joy complete.  
May your Spirit be with us today,  
and in the weeks ahead,  
as we open our hearts and minds  
to what this journey means.  
Strengthen us as we strive  
to put our faith into action,  
and so bring others to know  
the companionship of Christ.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

*All* **Amen.**



***Suggested Song***  
**Christ Be Beside Me**

**BREAKING OPEN OUR STORY****Reflection**

In Season One of *ARISE Together in Christ*, we embarked on an extraordinary journey together, seeking a deeper encounter with Jesus the Christ. Our companions and guides were Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, and Paul. Above all, we explored how because of our Baptism we are now living a new life, the life of the Risen Christ in the community of the Church.

In Season Two we explored the theme of “conversion.” Conversion means turning life around; turning away from an old life and turning toward a new life in God. Again, we saw this as a consequence of our Baptism, as being the beginning of a lifelong process of becoming fully who we already are—children of God.

Now in Season Three of *ARISE Together in Christ*, we will explore together yet another consequence of our Baptism: what it means both personally and as a community, to walk in the footsteps of Christ as we face today’s challenges and opportunities.

A good friend of mine is a national speaker in the area of catechesis. She once shared with me her memories of her first public appearances. “I was suffering from panic attacks, couldn’t sleep or eat the day before my presentation,” she said, adding, “I always feared that I was going to make mistakes or even faint.” I thought she was exaggerating, because when I saw her delivering a major address to a crowd of more than 1,000 people, she looked so confident and in control.

Several years later, when I met her again at a national conference, her presentation seemed different. She still looked sure of herself and delivered a wonderful speech, but I saw humility in her that I had never seen before. Over lunch afterwards, I asked her about this.

She told me that she had finally shared her anxiety about public speaking with her spiritual companion, who then guided her through a self-evaluation process. Part of this process was to acknowledge her talent and gift for public-speaking. It also meant

recognizing that she had been planning her presentations as if everything depended on her talents alone.

This turned her around. Now she saw in a new way her natural gifts as God-given and so as an invitation from God to use them for the benefit of others. Her focus shifted away from herself and onto the good not just that she could do, but that she should do. She let her natural talents, learned skills, and professional training be enhanced and enriched by the power of the Spirit of the risen Christ.

My friend became aware that when she tried to journey alone and relied solely on herself, anxiety would creep in. When she thought of Jesus walking with her, she was at peace, reassured. Now before beginning a presentation, she thinks of Christ being present, alongside her, and so she prays: “Jesus, you sent me to do this task. Take the gifts you have given

me and use them for the benefit of the people present here today. Don’t let me become an obstacle to your message of Good News.”

Prayer and action now work harmoniously in her life. In fact, her action is now prayer in a very real sense: something offered to God and for others. “Holiness” is not about turning away from this world (see sidebar). It is about journeying through this world, seeing it through the eyes of faith, and, in the footsteps of Christ, dispelling anxiety and building joy and hope not just for ourselves, but above all for others.

### Three key challenges

“ Because the laity’s call to holiness is a vocation in every sense of the word, it makes demands and poses challenges. Many challenges are embedded in the call to holiness ..., but we have raised up three as particularly apt for our time:

- (1) to make an explicit connection between holiness and active service, especially to the poor and vulnerable;
- (2) to recognize that human suffering—so much a part of the laity’s life—can be the catalyst for them to carry forth the Church’s healing ministry in diverse ways;
- (3) to reappropriate the Church’s tradition of a simple lifestyle in light of the pressing need for justice, as well as preserving the earth for ourselves and for generations to come.

The laity’s call to holiness is a gift from the Holy Spirit. Their response is a gift to the Church and to the world.”

USCCB, *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*



## **Invitation to Share**

*Take a few moments of silence to reflect on one of the following questions. Then share your reflections.*

1. What natural talents or learned skills do you use in service to your parish or broader community? Are there gifts which you sense you may not yet have fully embraced?
2. What might change in the way you do ordinary things if you thought that Christ was alongside you? In what ways would this be a consoling presence? In what ways would it be a challenging presence?

## **BREAKING OPEN GOD'S STORY**

### **The Word of God**

*Sometime before the meeting, the leader asks a member of the group to be prepared to proclaim the passage from the Gospel according to Luke.*

### **Luke 24:13-35**

#### **The Road to Emmaus**

*Reader*    *The Gospel of the Lord.*

*All*    **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

### **Reflect**

*Moment of silent reflection*

- What word, phrase, or image from the Scripture reading touches my heart or speaks to my life?

## **Invitation to Share**

*The leader invites those who so wish to echo a key word or phrase that touched them from the Scripture passage.*



## Reflection

What does it mean to follow in the footsteps of Christ? Behind the way the question is worded lies the metaphor of journey—a favorite metaphor that Luke uses both in his Gospel and in the Acts of the Apostles.

Of all the journeys Luke presents, perhaps the one we have just heard is the most appealing. It's very easy to identify ourselves with the two disciples, so troubled by the way things have turned out that they seem to think of themselves as ex-disciples. They literally turn their backs on Jerusalem.

They talk as they walk, but from the sadness on their faces, they just seem to be reinforcing each other's confusion.

Then a "stranger" joins them. In Luke's Gospel, the "stranger" and others on the margins of society have a special place in Jesus' compassion: we'll see a remarkable example of that in session five.

In the Emmaus story the stranger poses some straightforward questions, and persuades the two disciples to share their sadness. They talk of Jesus of Nazareth, how he proved himself a prophet by what he said and did. But that was while he was still with them. The problem is, he was sentenced to death and crucified. They have heard rumors from women (they seem to imply this is therefore unreliable) that he is alive, but all they know for certain is the tomb is empty. For them, Jesus' promises now seem to be equally empty.

The stranger reprimands them for not believing (he doesn't say "understanding," but "believing") the *full* message of the prophets. You can't pick and choose, he seems to say, the bits of Scripture you like! The Word of God can be consolation, but it is also a challenge. The Christ does bring good news, but the way to the fullness of that Good News is through his suffering and death.

How long did the conversation last? Not long enough for the two disciples who urge the stranger to stay. But long enough for the stranger to convert



what they saw only as bad news to good news, to transform their grief and anguish into hope and joy. It is during their evening meal together that he breaks bread, and they recognize Jesus in the stranger.

At that moment Jesus disappears. But this is no longer a cause of anxiety for the disciples. Exactly the opposite. They now speak of “our hearts burning within us.” They set out immediately and return to Jerusalem where they discover their good news matches the Good News. Luke doesn’t say it explicitly, but don’t you get the impression that though the disciples were walking toward Emmaus, they rush back to Jerusalem? Their lives now have meaning, purpose!

What can we learn from these two disciples who were among the first to faith share after and about the Resurrection? Perhaps that being a follower of Christ is less about us walking with Christ and more about letting him walk with us. Perhaps not to let anxiety blind us to the presence of Christ in the stranger. Certainly to be attentive to the fullness of God’s message to us in Scripture, and open to reading our lives through the eyes of faith as the fulfillment of that Word. Certainly that while grief and anguish may be part of our lives, and the lives of others, we are called to convert these into hope and joy. The turning point in the story is the breaking of bread: so, too, for us, the Eucharist should be the “source and summit.” Their Eucharistic experience “immediately” pushes them to get back on the road—this time in the right direction!

Following in Christ’s footsteps means heading for Jerusalem, where

### ***The Patience of God***

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Let us think ... of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus: their sad faces, their barren journey, their despair. But Jesus does not abandon them: he walks beside them .... Patiently he explains the Scriptures which spoke of him, and he stays to share a meal with them. This is God’s way of doing things: he is not impatient like us. ... God is patient with us because he loves us, and those who love are able to understand, to hope, to inspire confidence; they do not give up, they do not burn bridges, they are able to forgive. Let us remember this in our lives as Christians. ... God ... is never far from us, and if we return to him, he is ready to embrace us.”

Pope Francis  
Homily, April 7, 2013



Christ's mission reaches fulfillment. Baptism makes Christ's mission ours; in Baptism we promise to walk with Christ, and he promises to walk with us.

Intriguingly, there were *two* disciples on the road. We are baptized into the Church, a community. We'll reflect, with help from Saint Paul and Vatican II, on the meaning of being a community in session three.

For us, as for the two disciples, everything hinges on the Resurrection that we already share in Baptism. In that sacrament, and in every Sunday Eucharist, we proclaim with confidence and faith, as did the two disciples, "He is risen!" This is a proclamation we are called to make, not just in words, but in action. Our lives are to be a constant invitation to others to "*ARISE Together in Christ!*"

## **Invitation to Share**

*Take a few moments of silence to reflect on the following questions. Then share your reflections.*

1. To which part of the Emmaus story do I most relate? Is there anything in the story that surprises me?
2. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus do not recognize Jesus until he is gone. Recount a time when you only recognized the presence of Christ in hindsight.
3. Share an experience of your "heart burning within you" either from personal reading of Scripture, or from faith sharing on Scripture in your *ARISE* group.
4. How can I make what is good news in my life into a message of Good News for others?

## **INVITATION TO ACT**

*Sharing and being together in a small Christian community fosters growth in our faith and in our spirituality. But no communal sharing is complete*





*without a serious commitment to putting our faith into practice.*

In this session we have reflected on what it means to walk in the footsteps of Christ: to what kind of action does this inspire us?

*Some Suggestions*

1. Take time to reread today's Scripture. Imagine yourself in the text, as the unnamed disciple. Then, in a spirit of prayer, reflect on the following questions: What is it that saddens me? What am I running away from? What would the stranger reprimand me for not believing? In what way will I turn around and get back on track for "Jerusalem"?
2. Christ is present in the "stranger." Commit to an action that "recognizes" the strangers in your community. For example, go out of your way to speak to someone you do not know at next Sunday's Mass.
3. Determine, either personally or with others from the group, concrete ways by which you can bring sad and disillusioned members of the community back to joy and hope.

***Closing Prayer***

***All*** Lord, make me know your ways,  
teach me your paths.  
Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God, my Savior.

*(Psalm 25:4-5)*

*Reader 1* Jesus says:

"I am the Way and the Truth and the Life.  
No one comes to the Father  
except through me."

*(John 14:6)*

**All** Lord, make me know your ways,  
teach me your paths.  
Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God, my Savior.

*Reader 2* “Were not our hearts burning within us  
while he was talking to us on the road,  
while he was opening the Scriptures to us?”  
*(Luke 24:32)*

**All** Lord, make me know your ways,  
teach me your paths.  
Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God, my Savior.



*Suggested Song*  
**We Walk by Faith**

## **Looking Ahead**

*Prepare for the next faith-sharing meeting by reading over Session Two.*

*In particular:*

- *read the “**Focus for this Session**” (on page 21).*
- *Read the Gospel passage: **Luke 4:14-22**. It would help your appreciation of this episode if you read all the way through verse 30.*
- *Read “**Ten Principles of Catholic Social Thought**” on pages 83-87.*