

A REFLECTION: *companions on the journey* AND EUCHARIST

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What does *companions on the journey* mean to you? Let's break it apart, like bread, and examine it. The word "companion" stems from the Latin *com panis*; meaning with bread. When you invite someone into your home or go to someone else's home for a meal and break bread together, you become real to one another. You share stories, laughter, fears, joys and lives. You can't be phony (you've got food in your mouth) and you are honest and real with one another. You walk together, becoming companions; friends for a while. You begin to love one another.

Who are your companions? The people in your family? Your neighbours, your friends, your co-workers, your fellow parishioners? The people in your community, in Canada, in the world? Your friends in the League, the people the League serves, your spiritual companions? Who walks closely with you through life?

Remember what the nuns used to say, "You are who your friends are. Be selective." Pick nice friends, read good books, listen to the best music, go to the loveliest places, look at good art and watch excellent movies. Give yourself good inner companions too.

How do you treat your friends, those close to your heart? You love them and want the best for them. You listen to them and do what you can to help them. Can you imagine if the whole world acted like a community of companions? Just imagine!

Jesus is our companion. He loved to break bread and share a meal with people. Who were the companions of Jesus? What did He say to them? What kinds of things did they do together?

When we gather around the Eucharistic table, we share the bread and wine, the body and blood of Jesus, in communion. We become one around that table of sacrifice. Jesus tells us that He loves us, He calls us His friends and He invites us to gather often around the altar and share the sacred bread of Himself. It is then that we are really joined through a deeper connection. Jesus is our companion and we have become spiritual companions because of Him.

Most Rev. Gerald Wiesner O.M.I., Bishop of Prince George, says the church gathers us in around the table of sacrifice, and then sends us out to share the Good News.

Gather in, feed, send out. Gather in, feed, send out. It is a rhythm, just like a beating heart. The Eucharist is the beating heart, food for our journey and the bread of life. Jesus told us, "I am the Bread of life; whoever believes in Me will be saved."

Consider our reflection on bread. It doesn't satisfy forever, hunger comes again and more is needed – more food, more friendship, more Eucharist. It is the same as the rhythm of a beating heart. In our friendships, we need to nurture the relationships by getting together periodically.

Bread is eaten – real bread, the bread of companionship and the Eucharistic bread. Eating these breads gives energy, creating a desire to move and nudging us out into the world, much like a mother bird. We don't eat and grow fat, lazy and complacent. We don't stay with our friends forever. We don't move into church and camp out around the Eucharistic table! No, these breads in our life give us energy.

We are sent forth on our journey and participate in life encountering other people and making a difference. The journey can be scary but we know we can come back for more companionship, more communion and more courage. Then out we go again. The beating heart.

I've been struck by the huge impact of one person acting passionately on one idea. Think of Terry Fox. Think of Esther Bryan and her *Quilt of Belonging*. Think of Jean Vanier, Mother Teresa or our own honorary life members.

"Go, I will be with you," Jesus said to their hearts.

Life is the journey. We are challenged to be present to every moment and to savour the journey, its companions, and its discoveries. What is Jesus saying to each of us now?

We are all being drawn toward "the centre," as the philosopher Teilhard de Chardin says. Founder of L'Arche Jean Vanier says, "We are being drawn back to our source." Life's magnetism draws us back to life with God, our Creator.

We thank God for giving us companions who love us, walk with us, teach and affirm us and challenge us forward. We offer Him the muddle of our lives, the adventures and vignettes, and the service that we render along the way. "Take Lord, receive, all I have You have given me. Give me only Your love and Your grace. With these I will be rich enough and will desire nothing more!" †