



And their eyes were opened

By Jem Sullivan, Ph.D.

Supper at Emmaus, Caravaggio, 1602-1603, National Gallery London

Caravaggio, the master Italian Baroque painter, captures the dramatic moment of "Eucharistic amazement" when the disciples recognize Jesus in the breaking of bread. The supper at Emmaus was the high point of the disciples' journey from discouragement and fear to the joyful surprise of sharing a meal in the sacred presence of Jesus. On the road, the disciples' hearts burned as Jesus walked with them, opened the meaning of the Scriptures, and accepted their invitation to a meal. The disciples carried into the darkness of the evening hour their

physical exhaustion from the long, dusty walk. They also brought to the table all that weighed down their hearts with disappointment and anguish at the suffering and death of Jesus, their teacher and Lord. Jesus had transformed their lives. Now they felt only the void of emptiness, like sheep without a shepherd.

Against the sharp contrast of light and shadow, known as *chiaroscuro*, the disciple on the right stretches his hands out as he recalls Jesus' death on the cross. And two disciples on the left draw back in astonishment as their eyes are opened in recognition of Jesus who takes bread, gives thanks in blessing, and offers them bread. The table is rich with meat, drink, and fruit. Yet it is Jesus' sacred presence that rivets their attention.

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus revealed himself gradually in the Word of God and in the sacramental sign of bread, evoking the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist we are privileged to participate in at every Eucharist. May we share in the same Eucharistic amazement of the disciples at Emmaus.