I am sure this encounter with the risen Lord along the road to Emmaus was life changing for Cleopas and his companion. It was one of those experiences that would have been emblazoned on their memories. A very special time with their Lord. They started out feeling sad, bewildered and confused, but then Jesus came and walked alongside them. He opened the scriptures to them and explained the meaning of all that had taken place. Their hearts burned within them.

It was a brief encounter. No sooner had they recognised him, as he broke the bread and gave it to them, than he disappeared from their sight. They could no longer see him, but their hearts were overflowing with joy.

We too can have special times when the Lord seems very close. This retreat may have been one of those times for some of you.

When Jesus told his disciples *'to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them* ... *and teaching them to obey everything he had commanded,'* he also told them, 'And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age'.

As we continue our journey, Jesus comes and walks alongside us. At times we may not recognise him, we may feel separated from his presence. At these times the journey can be lonely and difficult and the way ahead not clear. At these times we have to walk by faith.

And yet despite the way we feel, we have his promise that he is with us. He will continue to guide us, to open up the scriptures to us and lead us in the right path. At other times we are aware of His presence and his will for us is clear.

Most of you will have very busy lives. I know my diary is usually pretty full. I have lots of plans and commitments. However even if we do have plans for each day no-one truly knows what lies ahead.

Each day is a journey into the unknown and yet we have the assurance of Jesus’ presence with us always, and the knowledge, *that ‘In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

As you leave today and return to your current home, nothing may have changed but we pray that this retreat has refreshed you. It may even have opened you to see things from a different perspective. We pray that you will be encouraged for the journey ahead.