Jesus determines to go to Jerusalem: a critical climax in Chapter 9 when he goes out to the world. Luke reaches from which the preaching of the Gospel is constantly moving and the hub Jerusalem is the point toward which Jesus loved Jerusalem and her people, and it distressed him that many were rejecting him. He continued his journey nonetheless, a final journey to his death. After his death, some of his disciples left Jerusalem. Disappointed and disillusioned, hopelessly licking their wounds, they headed back to their former lives. Chapter 24 of Luke recounts the beautiful story of two disciples who encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus — the road away from Jerusalem — and how he asked where they were going and what had happened to make them so sad. They did not recognize him, but he explained the Scriptures and blessed and broke bread with them, just as he had done at the Last Supper. Their eyes were opened, and they returned to Jerusalem full of hope in the risen Lord. Spiritually, we are constantly going and coming from Jerusalem.

There is a learning curve to discipleship, and we alternate between fear and sluggishness, conviction and doubt, hope and hesitation. One day we are zealously determined to make the journey to Jerusalem with Jesus no matter the cost — to take up our cross and suffer with him, to stand up for the faith and live as Jesus lived. The next day when something unnerving happens, we hesitate and head in the opposite direction, away from the cross and toward Emmaus.

But Jesus catches up with us, too, not at all surprised that fear of the cross has gotten the best of us.

Back on the road
“What are you thinking as you walk away?” he gently questions. If we pour our hearts to him in prayer and listen to his word, he opens our eyes and gives us strength for the return trip. And he feeds us. In every sense, the Eucharist is food for the journey, as Luke's account of the meeting on the road to Emmaus unmistakably illustrates. Wherever we find ourselves spiritually — walking toward or away from Jerusalem — we need the nourishment of the Lord's body and blood.