

The Beauty of the Cross

Lenten 2026

Resurrection and New Horizons in Pastoral Accompaniment

Luke 24:13–35

The road to Emmaus begins where many processes of pastoral accompaniment also begin: in pain, confusion, and hopelessness. Cleopas and another disciple walk under the weight of a theology shattered by what, for them, represented not only the grief of losing a loved one, but also the failure of the cross. Their hopelessness becomes evident in the phrase: “we had hoped...” (Luke 24:21). It is there, in that sacred space, where Jesus joins them, not to judge, but to accompany the wounded heart toward a better path.

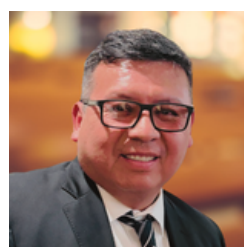
As a pastor and chaplain, I have seen that “Emmaus” many times in hospital corridors, in hospice beds, and in hands trembling with despair and lament. As president of the Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos, I ask myself what kind of theological education we need in order to form leaders in such confusing and challenging times. I believe that today, more than ever, we need a theology free from rushed judgment and cold correction, a theology that sustains the soul when we do not have answers.

This scene reveals a deeply healing theology of pastoral care, one that begins by asking: “What kind of conversation is this...?” (Luke 24:17). Jesus does not ask in order to know; he asks in order to open a sacred and safe space where pain and doubt can be expressed. Then, he validates them and sustains them without minimizing their sadness. The text echoes Psalm 34:18: “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

Then, Jesus interprets the Scriptures: “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them... what was said concerning him” (Luke 24:27). The incomprehensible event of the cross takes on meaning in light of God’s redemptive plan. To accompany is not to avoid the suffering of the afflicted; it is to help them read their suffering within the story of God, until the text illuminates their heart and revives Hope.

The climax of this story takes place in hospitality, in the words, “Stay with us” (Luke 24:29). At the table, one of Jesus’ favorite places, he gives himself again “in the breaking of the bread” (Luke 24:30–31). There, in the space they create together to invite Jesus without expecting anything in return, everything changes. The breaking of the bread beautifully evokes the Lord’s Supper. Hospitality becomes communion, warmth, presence, and healing love.

The result of this sacred encounter with Jesus is restorative and empowering. It is notable, however, that Jesus does not foster codependency: he accompanies, validates, teaches, restores, and then lets go when the heart already burns with his presence (Luke 24:32). In times when our Latino community is the target of powers and narratives that dehumanize it, Emmaus calls us to seek Jesus in the midst of sorrow and hopelessness, and to form leaders capable of accompanying those who journey from the cross to Emmaus, until joy and hope are restored.



Rev. Carlos Ortiz, originally from Morelos, Mexico, serves God alongside his wife Ana and their sons Abdiel and Andy. A pastor, chaplain, and coach, he is President of the Hispanic Center for Theological Studies, and from Compton, California, he advances Christ-centered, biblical, and accessible theological education.

LENTEN 2026
Theological Reflections

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