

5th Sunday of Easter
05/14/17

Every once in a while, I am enlightened by something I read about a particular scripture passage and heading into this weekend was one of those times. You see, I know Jesus is the Way – I know that with all my mind and heart and soul. However, I think I was too focused on the mind part and not ready to consider the heart and soul part. It came to me as I was looking at a couple of Fr. Joe Robinson's commentaries.

He said that while he was praying one day, the image of Jesus as a compass came to him. A compass always points north. He doesn't understand exactly how magnetism works, nor do I. But he and I both know that if we follow the way a compass points, it will not mislead us.

He says that he doesn't understand God perfectly either, nor do I, because God is infinite and the infinite is too great for our finite minds. However, we trust in Jesus, and know that if we follow the way He points, He will not mislead us. We don't need a modern-day GPS, because He truly is the way and the truth and the life.

Fr. Joe also tells a story about a priest going to preach a retreat in a city in Florida. He decided to send a postcard to his mom back home – maybe it was close to Mother's Day. Anyway, as he walked out of his hotel, he saw a young man on a bike and asked where the post office was. The boy gladly gave him directions.

The priest thanked him and then invited the boy to church that evening. He told him "If you come to church this evening, I'll tell you the way to get to heaven." "I don't think I'll be there," the boy answered. "You don't even know your way to the post office." Fr. Joe then reminds us the way to heaven is not a street we can walk or drive down. Any GPS can't help us get there. The way to heaven is a person; it is Jesus Himself. Through and in Jesus, one comes to eternal glory.

In the reading from the First Letter of Peter, we are told we are living stones, with Jesus as the cornerstone. As Barbara Born suggests, that means we are to follow the word as lived by Jesus. In doing that we are to build the kingdom of God, rather than fall over our lifeless selves. Ignoring the word separates us from God's love, removes us from God's peace, partitions us from God's mercy and can lead to anxiety, unquenchable searching and lack of purpose in life. When that happens, not only do we suffer, the entire mission suffers.

Sometimes following the example of Christ means we take on a specific service, like we heard in the first reading, as the teachers and servants of the poor wanted to be sure these folks were taken care of. When it appeared something was lacking, they found a solution.

Sometimes being a disciple means something more general, akin to a spiritual stance that guides our every decision. Whether specific or general, those who follow Christ, even if they have little worth in human eyes, can become icons of the only true God. They become, in the words of the second reading, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people of His own. We become signs of hope, confirming that God is still at work, calling everyone out of darkness into His wonderful light.

In the Gospel we heard Jesus tell His disciples He was going to prepare a place for them. One author suggested that does not mean He will prepare, but rather that He is going in order to prepare. While the difference may be subtle, this author says Jesus is going to His passion and death to prepare the place for us. He is going to His death that we may have life.

In the prayer after communion, we will ask God to lead those He has imbued with heavenly mysteries to pass from former ways to newness of life. That's us, my friends. If we allow Jesus to be our way, then His truth and His life will naturally follow and we will be the living stones we are called to be.