

“People of The Way”

St. Ann 05/14/17

Fr. Jim Plough

“We do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? (John 14: 1-12).” A popular song of the 1990’s called “The Way” concluded each stanza with the line “Where were they going without ever knowing the way?” The song was catchy, upbeat, and memorable. Like so many songs of that decade, the music of “The Way” conveyed a spirit of optimism and enthusiasm, anticipating a new millennium on the horizon. Young people didn’t have a clue to where they were going, but anticipating soon going off to college, they were innocently naïve, fearless and eager to explore.

Your spirit may be closer to that of Jesus’ disciples, who were anxious about Jesus’ leaving them and not knowing the course they should follow. Without Jesus, they sensed they would be homeless. When my folks died in the same year 45 years ago, I suddenly realized I was without a home. The institution I lived in was a college, not a home. In time, I came to regard my brother’s home as my own. Now that he is gone, I am feeling homeless again.

Those of you who live alone, without family, know something of what Jesus’ disciples felt. What troubles you about your insecurity? What bothers you about the way things are in the church, in your own faith, in our society, in the world? How can you know the way? Today’s Scriptures offer not only a question, but an answer.

In addition, we have the joy to share with a family celebrating the baptism of their daughter. She is not homeless, like so many children in the world, orphaned by war and chaos. She is at home in two ways today, belonging now not only to her parents, but to a community of faith welcoming her to a second home. Those who are baptized are never homeless.

Recall the words of St. Paul, welcoming gentile converts to the faith. “You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone (Ephesians 2. 19-21.”

Our second reading today speaks of the baptized as living stones, solidly grounded. Of Jesus, the text affirms that Jesus, crucified, was the stone that the builders rejected, now having become the very cornerstone of a new edifice, a new home for people of “the Way” (Peter 2: 4-9). The earliest designation of those who became followers of Jesus was not “Christians,” but people of “The Way,” people who followed Jesus’ way.

In today’s gospel, Jesus tells his disciples “I am the way.” In Greek, the word way literally means road. Jesus us shows the road to follow. Get on the right road! Jesus is our sure GPS. We can’t go wrong. We might not know where we are going, but we know the way.

As we celebrate Mothers’ Day today, we might recall that our beloved Mother Mary has long been saluted in the Litany of Loretto as Gate of heaven, morning star, health of the sick, refugee of sinners, comforter of the afflicted, help of Christians, a mother’s role throughout history.

A prayer I offer as each day begins is: “Glorious Resplendent Mother, Our Lady of the Lake, courageous as a gentle candle shining brightly amid the wind and storms of doubt and adversity, light our way this day, Blessed Mother, to him who is your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, for you are the morning and evening star of our lives.” Long ago, I was a graduate student at the University of Our Lady of the Lake, Notre Dame, and have long treasured my wrist watch with the inscription “University of Notre Dame du Lac.” I treasure, as well, memories of having lived on that lake’s shoreline. Like early Christians, I have always been conscious that Jesus leads us on our way. We too are “people of the way.”