

Homily for the Fifth Sunday of Easter – April 20, 2008

Acts 6:1-7

1 Peter 2:4-9

John 14:1-12

Ever been riding along, not sure if you're going the right way,
hoping to find a sign to reassure you?
Then, after miles of waiting, an intersection appears ahead.
Intersections have signs!
But this intersection has about 6 signs and now you're not sure
if you should turn left or right, go north or south...

Maybe that's how Thomas felt in this exchange with Jesus.

Jesus has told his closest friends,
"Not to worry! I'm leaving to get things ready for you.
Then I'll come back to take you with me.
And you know the way!"
But Thomas, the doubter, the realist, the practical guy says,
"Jesus, we have no idea where you're going!
How could we possibly know how to get there?"

Have you ever been in that place where you feel lost
and don't know the way out, let alone the way home?

Has there been a time in your life when you just couldn't figure out
what you should do? what God might want you to do?
what would be the right thing, the best thing for you to do?

Thomas was feeling just that kind of frustration
when he heard Jesus say, "You know the way."
It's the frustration of thinking that maybe you should know the way,
certainly that you want and need to know the way – but you don't!

And Jesus' answer is not altogether or immediately satisfying.
At least – it's not a quick solution.
What Thomas really wants is a Triple A map
with a big red X indicating the destination
and a yellow highlighted route leading him to it.
What Jesus offers is more like:
"Well, Tom, it's down the road apiece.
Just follow me – and if you lose me... well...
just keep following me..."

What Jesus is saying is,
"Thomas, I AM the map! I'm the WAY.
And I'm the TRUTH. And I'm the LIFE.

"Stay as close to me as you can
and you'll be heading in the right direction.

"Make every effort to find the path that leads to the TRUTH
and do everything you can to avoid
the shortcuts and dead ends of what's false.

"And always choose the paths that bring you LIFE.
Don't head in directions that burden you
and drag you down, eating away at your heart and your hopes.

"Choose what brings you LIFE and you'll end up
where you're supposed to be
even if right now you don't know where that is,
or how to get there;
even if right now you can't see where I'm leading you;
even if right now you can't see me at all..."

In a few weeks we'll be inviting our high school seniors
to come forward for a blessing at the time of their graduation.
and each year when we do that,
we give them a copy of prayer from the spiritual writer, Thomas Merton.
It goes something like this:

*O God, I have no idea where I'm going.
I don't see the road ahead of me.
I don't know for certain where it will end.
I don't really always know my own self,
and the fact that I think I'm doing what you ask of me
doesn't necessarily mean that I am.
But I believe that even the desire to do what's right
does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire in everything I do:
the desire to do what you ask of me.
I hope I'll never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I live my life that way
you'll lead me by the right path,
even though I may not know I'm on it.
So, I will trust you always
especially when I'm lost,
even in the shadow of death.
Even then, I will not be afraid,
because you will be with me,
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.**

In a few minutes you'll come to this altar
where Christ will meet us in the bread and cup of the Lord's Supper,

the same Supper he was sharing with Thomas
in the gospel today.

Though he sometimes seems absent along the paths of our lives,
we can always find him here in the Eucharist.
At this table he renews his friendship with us
and promises us, as he promised Thomas,
to be the way for us when we are lost,
to show us the truth of things when we are confused,
and to be our life even in the shadow of death.

Come to his table and be refreshed.
The journey can be very long
and we can easily lose our way
but at this table the Lord meets us
and sets us again on the right path.
We need his help because he is
the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE.