

May 14, 2017

Cathedral

10:00 and Noon

Within this stretch of a few days, there are a lot of graduations. For graduates, it's a sense of accomplishment...but also, graduates look to their future, and it's a mix of leaving behind what they're used to, excitement about what lies before them, and risks. There may be fears in that mix, too. It's a lot of changes.

When I graduated from high school and, with the other graduates marched down the main aisle of what is now the Convention Center, my Dad was sitting on the end of the aisle. As I walked past him, he whispered the score of the St. Louis Cardinal baseball game being played; he was listening to a transistor radio. Yes, we've all been graduates at one time or another. We know the mixed bag of emotions.

Friends: This Sunday of the Easter Season we hear Jesus with his disciples at the Last Supper. It's his farewell to them. He's about to be lifted up—lifted up on the cross; then, lifted up from the grave; and finally...Jesus will be lifted up to his Father's right hand in heaven. It's his final talk with them, but it's like his commencement address, getting his disciples ready for their future, and Jesus won't be with them like they're used to. Shortly, they will "commence" to be church in his name.

We're part of that commencement, that new beginning. And today's Gospel reading begins with Jesus reassuring those disciples at the Last Supper, and us now: **"Do not let your hearts be troubled...have faith in me."**

Jesus knew their fears. He knew they would never be ready. But then, strangely, on the other end of today's Gospel reading, Jesus makes a wild, over-the-top promise: **"Amen, amen, I say to you: whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father."**

Extravagant?—*We "do greater works than" Jesus?*

That's what he said. At the reading's start, the disciples—and we—are **"troubled,"** afraid, unsure. By the end of the Gospel reading, Jesus really claims that we'll **"do greater works than"** he has done.

He's nicknamed "Doubting Thomas." Actually, though, I can see why Thomas asks Jesus in the middle of today's Gospel: **"Master, we don't know where you are going; how can we know the way?"**

Give us the directions, Jesus! Give us a reliable GPS to get us through the dark woods and wrong turns!

Actually, I can identify with how Thomas put it: **“Master...how can we know the way?”**

Sisters and brothers: We’re not given a map. We’re given a person. (1) **“I am the way, the truth and the life,”** Jesus tells us. That’s his commencement address to us: Be firmly anchored in Jesus. Then, he says: I’ll be your way, your truth and your life.

A 95-year-old parishioner, Mildred Alexander, is a longtime member of the Cathedral. In fact, she and her family were the first African-Americans to become part of IC. In that experience, and throughout their work and lives, Mildred has faced hard challenges and setbacks. Recently she spent 46 days in the hospital, including a heart surgery. At one point, Mildred told me, “Father Val, in life—both in hardships and joys—I’ve always seen the Lord going ahead of me, and I just follow him.”

Yes, over the centuries, so many believers have taken this well-traveled route. But, it’s not a map. It’s being anchored in the person of Jesus. Our forebears in the faith—those saints whose lives passed on the faith to us: well, they’ve taken this route, and they reassure us even when we’ve gotten lost.

“How can we know the way?” There are a lot of changes. We can lose the way.

“I am the way, the truth and the life.” Being anchored in the Risen Jesus, we’ll find the way.

(1) See Sr. Verna Holyhead, “A Well-Traveled Road,” in Give Us This Day—2017 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), pg. 151.