

The coming months of July and August will find many of us journeying on short or longer trips to visit relatives or friends, some other vacation destination (a big city or national park) and for our young adults leaving the security of home for college, the military or some other career education or training.

As we set out on our journeys, many of us will employ a portable or built in global guidance device in our vehicles. Mine asks me for basic information: state, city, house number, street name. Then it tells me it is searching its programmed maps. Seconds later my trip is organized. All I have to do is follow its electronic “voice” (whom I’ve named ‘Raphael’ after the Archangel Raphael patron of our archdiocese and patron of travelers). If I listen and stay with “Raphael” ultimately I will arrive at my destination. “Raphael” even gives me the exact time I will arrive at my journey’s end, as well as alerting me to any road construction or traffic delays along the way. “Raphael” will also search lodging, restaurants, and other attractions for me.

In today’s Gospel Jesus is on a journey. Along the way, he invites his twelve disciples, two other would-be disciples, and ultimately each of us to “Follow me.” The journey Jesus undertakes today, and to which he invites us, is one that ultimately brings us to salvation. It is a journey through death to life. It is a journey into the very mystery of Jesus himself. The challenge: whether or not we will listen and follow his “voice” and the “way” he maps out for us and on which he leads us. Or will we choose another way, follow another voice.

Jesus begins his journey at a crucial point in St. Luke’s gospel. Jesus has just come down from the mountain of the Transfiguration where his disciples Peter, James and John glimpsed the humanity of Jesus enveloped in heavenly glory. St. Luke in introducing today’s selection tells us, “When the days for Jesus’ being taken up were fulfilled...” indicating that from now on Jerusalem and the events of Jesus’ suffering, cross, death, resurrection and glorification will be the focus and destination of the journey.

Along the way, Jesus encounters a number of obstacles—he is not welcome in a Samaritan village; he rebukes the disciples James and John who want to take revenge; he

chides a potential follower, like Elisha initially in the first reading, who has (or makes up) excuses for not immediately following him; and he predicts lack of comfort and security for those who choose to set their coordinates on him.

With our computer-generated maps and auxiliary travel assistance we have the technology to know exactly where we are going. Jesus did not, and does not now, have a map or a Global Positioning System to give to those he called then, or us now. **All he offers is relationship with him. “Trust me; Believe in me; Follow me;” Jesus invites us. Are we willing to trust in Him, believe in Him, listen to Him, obey Him, follow Him?**

It seems so right and natural that we would want security in our journey. Jesus’ response to our condition is the reminder that he himself had no place to rest his head. He rested his heart and spirit in the hands of the Father who kept calling him. **It is to such faith Jesus invites us.**

Recently in a question and answer session with students completing the school year, Pope Francis was asked by a student struggling with doubts about his faith for words of encouragement. The Pope likened faith to a long walk. “To walk is an art. To walk is the art of looking at the horizon, thinking about where I want to go but also enduring the fatigue. And many times, the walk is difficult, it is not easy...There is darkness...even days of failure...one falls...But always think this: do not be afraid of failure. ... Do not be afraid of falling. In the art of walking, what is important is not avoiding the fall but not remaining fallen. Get up quickly, continue on, and go. ...But it is also terrible to walk alone, terrible and boring. Walking in community with friends, with those who love us, this helps us...get to the end.”

Today, Jesus invites us to journey with him or to continue our journey in his company. On our journey we do not travel alone. Jesus has gone ahead of us and in the Spirit is with us. That is what we celebrate in his gift of the Eucharist we receive in the Mass. Today we are invited to say, or say again to Jesus: “I/we will follow you wherever you go.”