

## The Journey

Jeremiah 33:14-16  
Psalm 25  
1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2  
Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

As we begin a new liturgical year and the Advent Season, we are reminded that we are on a journey. In a big way, an eternal way, we are a pilgrim people journeying to our homeland, Heaven. In smaller ways, though, we are reminded daily that God is journeying with us and leading us closer to Himself and His Love. Our Responsorial Psalm today, Psalm 25, was saturated with the language of journeying—

Make known to me your ways, LORD;  
teach me your paths.  
Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my savior.  
-Psalm 25:4-5a

Every single one of us can think of at least one “journey” that we are being invited to make right now in our lives. It may not be that God asked us to make that particular journey, but He wants to be there with us as we go through it. It might be a difficult journey; it might be a joyful one. Maybe we are going through the “journey” of losing our job, or maybe we’ve started a new one. Maybe we’ve gained a new family member through pregnancy, birth, or marriage; maybe we’ve lost a family member through a move or death. Maybe we are on the journey of having discovered a new virtue or a new vice in our lives. It might be that we have begun a new hobby or interest or that we have lost interest in something that we used to love. Maybe our current journey involves a decrease in our physical, mental, or emotional health; maybe we find ourselves healthier than we’ve ever been. Regardless of what our journey looks like, God wants to be intimately involved in it, changing our hearts and giving meaning to how He’s moving us.

This weekend, I am going to briefly share with you what my current journey has looked like. Several months ago, I felt like the Lord told me in prayer that He was moving me. My initial understanding of that message was that I might be getting a new assignment. Thankfully, after visiting with my spiritual director, we both felt that God was talking about an interior, spiritual movement more than a physical movement. Over the course of the following months, I began to realize that the new “move” God was asking me to make had to do with being “stretched” beyond the boundaries of our parish and beyond the boundaries of my comfort zone.

God has been inviting me to love more people—to make myself more available to people outside of our parish through councils that I serve on, through directing retreats and days of recollection, etc. In addition to this “stretching” beyond the boundaries of our parish, God has been moving me beyond the boundaries of my own comfort zone, especially regarding the new ministry in Spanish that will be starting in January. In all of these things, God has continued to tell me that He wants to use me in many different ways, in many different places, with many different people. He confirmed this in a humorous (but beautiful) way during my silent retreat this past week.

On Wednesday afternoon, I had walked down to the nearby cemetery to pray Evening Prayer. When I was finished I was slowly walking down a country road, back to my cabin. A couple of ATVs went past me and turned around and went past me again and turned around again. As they approached me the third time it was obviously that they were going to stop and talk. Much to my surprise, they were all people I knew—Catholics from Fort Smith! After a brief conversation with the father and his two sons, the father told me that when his grade school aged son saw me walking down the road he commented, “Look—there’s another hobo!” His dad could not figure out where the boy would have gotten such a strange idea.

Throughout that night, I couldn’t sleep very well. I kept thinking about that conversation with the father and his sons. There was nothing in particular that struck me as interesting about the conversation, but I couldn’t get it out of my head. The next morning, I asked God why the conversation would not go away. He told me that He wanted to teach me something through it. I asked what and He pointed to what the kid had said about me. “What?” I said, “About being a hobo?” God’s reply was, “Yes, you are my hobo.” That did not sit well with me! God was telling me that I am a bum!

Now, it is always recommended that when God gives us a word in prayer that we are not familiar with, we should do what is called a “word study.” I quickly looked up “hobo” in the encyclopedia and discovered some *very* interesting things that confirmed what it seemed God had been saying to me for many months. The first thing the encyclopedia noted was that hobos are NOT bums or tramps! A bum apparently is someone who is homeless and who does not want to work. A tramp is similar, but will work if he or she absolutely *has* to work. A hobo, however, is someone who *wants* to work and travels from place to place doing various jobs. Not only are they not bums, but there is actually a highly developed code of ethics among hobos regarding their work and high moral character! Wow! Truly, God is stretching me to move beyond what I’m familiar with... and as a hobo!

As we begin the Season of Advent, I invite us to be conscious of the journey God currently has us on as individuals, families, and as a parish. What is most important about the journey is not what happens exteriorly, but rather, what God does interiorly, in our heart. He wants to use every journey as an opportunity to lead us closer to His Son. Over the course of the next few weeks, we will apply some particular principles of spiritual journeys to our own personal journeys that God has us on right now.

### **SUGGESTED PRAYER EXERCISES:**

- ✚ Read Isaiah 43:18-19 and talk with God about the new things that are currently going on in your life.
- ✚ Read Luke 24:13-35. What was going on in the hearts of the disciples on their journey to Emmaus before Jesus began walking with them? ...While Jesus walked with them? ...After Jesus walked with them? What has been happening in *your* heart during your journey with Christ? The Disciples were headed to Emmaus, where does God seem to have you headed?