

Journeying Home

I like getting away, but I'd rather skip the getting there. I remember my husband telling me when we were bumper-to-bumper at 60 miles an hour on I-75 that the journey was part of the vacation. I muttered something at him and seriously considered turning back. Obviously he was wrong. I thought "This was not fun." It was not relaxing. It was not vacation. However, in the years since his death, like many other things, I realize he was right about this.

With grandchildren out of town I travel frequently to be with them. And I've learned to be a little more patient with the journey. While the security lines at the airport are a pain and the plane seats cramped, the goal of a hug from Sam and outstretched arms from Simon keep me focused and I find I often sit next to amazing people and the attendant often offers extra peanuts and cookies. The train ride to their town, though long, provides me with a cross section of life that I'd miss if I were speeding along on the highway.

I think these reflections also apply to our journey in life. Pope Francis spoke in this vein when he talked to a group of students: "Journeying is an art because, if we're always in a hurry, we get tired and don't arrive at our journey's goal. If we stop, if we don't go forward we also miss the goal." It would be like seeing the traffic and turning around. We'd never get to our destination.

"Journeying is precisely the art of looking toward the horizon, thinking where I want to go but also enduring the fatigue of the journey, which is sometimes difficult ..." the Pope said. "There are dark days, even days when we fail,

even days when we fall. [Sometimes] one falls but always think of this: don't be afraid of failures. Don't be afraid of falling. What matters in the art of journeying isn't not falling but not staying down. Get up right away and continue going forward." It's like the popular contemporary Christian song says, "A saint is just a sinner who falls down and gets up."

"But also, it's bad walking alone," the Pope cautions. "It's bad and boring. Walking in community, with friends, with those who love us,—that helps us. It helps us to arrive precisely at that goal, that 'there where we're supposed to arrive.'" There's a photo from Father Jim's 500 mile walk on the Way of St. James in Spain of a



centipede walking alone on the dirt road in front of him. He was walking alone at this time and seeing the centipede he found himself thinking that he wished he had a hundred companions walking with him. And then he realized that he was walking in communion with the thousands of others who had been there before him. The centipede was more than a companion but also a reminder that as Christians we never walk alone.

That's one reason why we come together in prayer at Mass each week. We're all on the same journey. And coming together to praise God, be encouraged by the Scriptures, and be fed by the Eucharist we remember and give thanks for God's great mercy and love and are reminded that we are not alone. Jesus sent his disciples out two by two. We too, are sent out together to glorify God with our lives as we make our way home to God.

—Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate