

**People of the Way**  
**Homily - April 24, 2005**  
**The Reverend Colleen Spaeth – Deacon**

Not too long ago I had to travel a distance for my job. I wasn't exactly sure of the best route, so I went onto mapquest and got some help. It's pretty cool, you can plug in where you're leaving from and your destination, and in just a few seconds you have detailed instructions. As I followed the instructions I came up to some construction, and sure enough, the road ahead was closed, and now my mapquest stuff was useless – because without my trusty directions, I had no plan b. Luckily I was able to call the place where I was headed and get some detour help – I was rescued by someone experienced in the route, someone who had traveled that road and knew how to get me from lost to found.

So we come to today's Gospel of John where Jesus says to his friends in words we have heard before, words very often used as we celebrate the lives of those who have gone ahead to be with God, the words Jesus spoke the night before he was nailed to the cross:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many room; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

And then of course there's Thomas, “Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

And though now looking back a confusion about knowing where Jesus was going is not one we share, we know the ending, we still can claim I think the

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question of knowing the way there – that question can still burn in many hearts.

In our lives – in our spiritual journey -

If we wanted to find a better way – where would we look? If we were feeling less than OK, if we had a little nudge in the pit of our stomach that said, OK – things aren't EXACTLY perfect, or things could be better, I'm not quite sure I can put my finger on it, but somewhere somehow I got onto a detour, and have yet to find the road again?

I think I have got lots of places to see yet before I cash in. I want to visit more of this beautiful country. I think also that my spiritual life has more miles to go, or maybe deeper. And John says today, “Do not let our hearts be troubled.” “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” Sometime I believe that, and it works, and other times I'm like, “okay, God, easy for you to say!” You don't have kids to raise to hopefully be productive human contributors, pay for education, worry about their getting jobs, and what's left when that job is done – where am I going to enjoy my twilight years?” Easy for God to sit up there and pontificate on my situation.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled.” How then do I get past myself, how then do I surrender to God my stuff? My concerns? My cares? I wonder if it's not by stepping back and looking around – and being grateful.

I have gotten in to the habit of not reading the morning paper any more. But Friday I had some extra time, and I glanced at the front page of the Courier,

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and was introduced to Dylan Brown. Dylan is six, and has a severe form of muscular dystrophy – to play with his brother he has to lay on his back or his side on the floor, where he plays with his pokemon toys.

He cruises around in his motorized wheelchair that he drives with his chin.

He has lots of dreams – when he grows up his lists all the things he’s gonna do, “I’m gonna be a chef, I’m gonna go to outer space, I’m gonna be an artist, “I’m gonna be in the Army, a policeman, I’m gonna be a zookeeper, I’m gonna be a hot-air balloon driver – long terms plans and dreams.

Look at his face – the face of God, joy and love and hope, a beaming dream-full face. And he has a more immediate dream, he wants a new wheelchair that will allow him to stand up on his own for the first time. The chair is called a Standing Dani Wheelstand and it costs \$12,000. Now Dylan’s dad is in the Army and his family can’t afford the costs – but if he could get this chair he could stand, it would help his legs and lungs, and he’d get stronger.

Dylan is experienced in hard times. He’s had nine surgeries. Dylan understands he may never be able to walk, but his face lights up when he goes on about what he CAN do, he can talk, and with this chair I’ll be able to stand up, and I can be happy for the rest of my life. “ I can be happy!

After I read this article I thought of some wise words of Mother Theresa, ‘I know God will not give me anything I can’t handle. I just wish that he

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didn't trust me so much." All of a sudden my family concern and worry disappeared.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. In Peter's reading this morning we hear, we are God's own people, you me, and the Dylan's of the world. Dylan's problem is my problem, why? Because we all belong to each other, and when we realize that, we may very well realize more peace.

Do not let your hearts be troubled . Don't worry! Be Happy! Let yourselves be built into a spiritual house. God's own people - called out of darkness into light. What does all this mean – how do we live this out anyway?

I wonder if it's not just one moment at a time. Einstein was asked once what he thought the most important question was that a human being needed to answer. His reply, "Is the universe friendly or not?" When we meditate on Einstein's question we might become convinced that how each of us answers that question could be the key to whether we are happy and joy-filled or not, and whether an attitude of gratitude comes easily. If we believe the universe is a friendly place, we might believe that life is on our side, that good things will come our way, and even when bad stuff comes our way they are bumps in the road, maybe designed to teach us a lesson that will help us become more wise, more whole, more loving. St Paul says, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am in, therewith to be content."

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Do not let your hearts be troubled – don't worry – gratitude – contentment – I am the Way - the truth – and the life. Our experiences of Jesus, our faith, is an experience meant to be shared, not judged. I emailed Dylan yesterday, I told him how inspired I was by his story, his joy, his excitement about his life, and I told him I would be sending money to help make his dream come true, to stand up. I wanted to say, Do not Let your heart be troubled, but I didn't need to – his heart is just fine – he is living today. I am grateful for Dylans' witness, I am grateful for the reminder that as a follower of Jesus and as a member of this church community I must try and have an impact on my community. Wouldn't it be a good thing if we could see concrete evidence that our community is a better community and our town is a better town because Grace church is here?

Christ tells us that we can see such evidence – if we dream great dreams and if those dreams are to God's glory and not our own. What do we crave? What do we yearn for? Do we believe prayers are answered?

Could it be that sometimes the answer to prayer is no- I have plans, trust me in this? Sometimes it is no, not yet, the time is not right. Other times it is yes, I thought you'd never ask, and still other times it is yes, and just wait to see what else I have in store for you.

Do we believe that what God does for the faithful and what God allows to happen, how God answers prayers always works for the good? As a church,

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for people who gather in God's name to worship and work together the work we are called to do, do we believe?

What is our dream? What do we want most? Peter writes, "you are chosen people, a holy nation, a people belonging to God..." we have a purpose, we all have a purpose, and we have the tools that we need to accomplish that purpose, so much so that we can do even greater things –if we really want to.

"You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." I say let's put Christ to the test. Why not?

Amen.,