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THE WAY HOME TO THE FATHER

John 14:1-6; Easter 5A-Jr. Confirmation; May 3, 2026

Jesus' disciples were struggling to understand what He was saying in the time leading up to His death on the cross. Jesus said He was going home to His Father's house and showing His disciples the way there. Thomas said they didn't know where Jesus was going and didn't know the way. Not knowing where you are going is a scary feeling. Not knowing the way home, or not having a home to go to, is an even scarier feeling. The disciples' distress over this did not go away until they saw Jesus risen from the dead. Not knowing the way to the Father and being without a home is a terrible situation to be in.

Homelessness is a serious problem. Everyone should have a place they can call home, but many do not.

The causes of homelessness are varied and complicated. Untreated mental illness, sometimes connected to drug abuse, leads to homelessness; some with mental illness choose to be homeless and resist being helped. People fleeing abusive relationships may find themselves without a place to stay. Households broken by divorce or death can put people out on the street. Wars, violence, and natural disasters create homelessness. Loss of income, debilitating debt, and not paying housing bills can lead to evictions.

There are many causes of homelessness. Solutions to homelessness in America have been elusive, even after spending lots of money. It is complicated. Whatever its causes, what we can say is that homelessness reflects a world that has fallen into sin.

Jesus' words in today's Gospel give us the assurance that there is a place for us in His Father's house and that we won't be homeless. **“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.”** Having a home with our Father in heaven depends entirely on Jesus.

When He died on the cross and was buried, Jesus' disciples thought that He had failed to keep His promises, but they were wrong. Jesus' death only separated Him from them temporarily. He rose from the dead and appeared alive to them. Yet, once Jesus ascended into heaven to rule in glory with His Father, they would again not be able to see Him. When someone says He is going away for a while and will come back, as the time gets long, we might start to doubt it, especially while we are suffering. We can't see Jesus. All we have are His words of promise in the face of our troubles now. Can we trust Him to come back and take us to be with God forever?

Thomas said to [Jesus], "Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

One of the goals of instruction leading to Confirmation is to instill in our catechumens a confident faith in God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Faith comes from hearing God's Word in Christ. Although we have extensive requirements leading up to Confirmation and a comprehensive examination that tests a confirmand's ability to confess what was taught, faith is not merely knowledge, but trust in the God we know. How can we trust what we do not know?

Jesus' goal is for us to have faith in Him and His Father, **"Believe in God; believe also in Me."** This faith is worked in us by the Holy Spirit, especially through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, which happened when most of us were infants or children. In Baptism, God adopts us as His children and welcomes us into His family. Physical life in this world begins when we are conceived and born into our human families. Those births don't lead to eternal life, only death because of our original and actual sin. God provides a new birth and renewal for us by the Holy Spirit through baptism into Christ's death and resurrection. Having been justified by His grace through faith, we become heirs having the hope of eternal life. We have spiritual homes now in the Church on earth by faith, and we will have an eternal home with our Father in heaven.

Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us there, an eternal home with God our Father. We know where Jesus has gone and we know the way there because He has told us and shown us. **“I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”** This is one of the Bible verses our catechumens memorize during instruction. We want them to know and believe in Jesus as the Way to God their Father.

The Book of Acts is the history of God’s work of building the church through the apostles from the time of Jesus’ Ascension through St. Paul’s imprisonment in Rome. In Acts, we hear that the early Christian Church was known as “the Way” (9:2; 18:25-26; 19:9; 24:14, 22). People who were catechized, that is, taught the faith; they learned the **“way of salvation”** (16:17) through Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus Christ is still the only Way of salvation. What is this “way”?

Jesus Himself tells us. **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him”** (Jn 3:16-17). That the Father **“gave”** His only-begotten Son includes both His incarnation and saving sacrifice on the cross.

God’s Son became man to save sinful mankind. The Small Catechism summarizes this as, “Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true Man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord.” God sent His Son into this sinful world to save us from sin and death, forgiving our sin and raising us to life with Jesus. The Father gave His Son at the incarnation so He could die on the cross and rise from the dead to accomplish this, the first sense of **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son.”**

The second sense of **“gave”** is the actual sacrifice God’s Son made on the cross. The Catechism describes Jesus as our Redeemer. “...Who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and the power of the devil; not with gold or silver but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.” Redeem means to “buy back,” or “purchase” from something. God the Father **“gave”** His Son as the price paid to redeem and save us from perishing and for eternal life.

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Faith in Jesus, faith worked in us by the Holy Spirit, knows the way home to the Father. We are on the way to the Father but not there yet. Our way home to our heavenly Father follows the same path Jesus travelled. He was born, baptized, died, rose, and ascended into heaven. We are born in sin, baptized into Christ and die to sin. We will die physically one day and, finally, be raised from the dead in our bodies to ascend into heaven to live with Jesus in our Father's house. Jesus' way is our way. When we are confirmed, we promise to travel this way throughout our earthly lives and pray for God's strength to remain faithful unto death.

When I was confirmed 49 years ago, I made the same promises, though my memory of that day is fuzzy. As a pastor for the last 37 years, I have seen many confirmands and their families struggle to keep their promises. Those families that just met the minimum requirements of instruction and church participation leading up to Confirmation often stop attending worship soon afterwards. I hope this won't be the case, and I pray that none of you fall away from the Church but remain active your whole lives.

The world we live in is full of temptations and distractions that pull us away from life in the church and the Way to our Father's house. When we fall into sin and even unbelief, God's love for us in Jesus remains. We can repent of our sins of taking our own way and return in faith to Jesus as our Way. God will forgive and strengthen us by His Word and the Sacrament of His body and blood for the journey home. When we find ourselves in the darkness of this world, God's Word of light in Christ shines on us will lead us back on the path to life.

Homelessness does not have to be an eternal problem. Jesus has prepared a place for us in our Father's house. **“Let not your hearts be troubled,”** He says. **“Believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also... I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.”** Amen.