

WALKING THE WAY TOGETHER

Acts 7:55-60, Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16, 1 Peter 2:2-10, John 14:1-14

Christ is the way not only because he leads us, but because he gathers us into a shared journey of knowing, trusting, and walking together.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled.” That is how Jesus begins, not with command but with comfort. Because the disciples are confused, uncertain, even anxious about where Jesus is going. Thomas gives voice to that confusion when he says, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” And Jesus responds, not with directions or instructions, but with himself: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

This Gospel becomes very real when we bring it into our lived experience. I remember once accompanying one of my priests in the diocese on a pastoral visit. As bishop, I joined him to see how he ministers to his people. He was going to visit one of his members. But along the way, we got lost, not once, but twice. And slowly it became clear that he had not really visited that member before. He did not know where his sheep lived. It was a simple situation, even a little humorous, but also revealing. A shepherd who does not know where his sheep are.

That experience brings us back to what we heard last Sunday about the Good Shepherd, the one who knows his sheep and whose sheep know him. And now today, we hear Jesus say, “I am the way.” But what does it mean to guide others to the way if we do not even know where they are, how they live, or what they are going through? The challenge is not only about leadership, but about relationship.

At the same time, I have also experienced a different kind of reality here in our chaplaincy. Many of you do not easily invite your priest into your homes. I am nearing the end of my three years, and there are still many homes I have not seen. This led me to reflect, not with judgment but with curiosity, whether this is simply a matter of culture. And then I remembered an experience that helped me understand this more deeply.

A colleague of mine, from the East Asia Desk of ZMÖ in Hamburg, once visited us in Mindanao. As part of our hospitality, we assigned someone to accompany her closely, a kind of “buddy” who would assist her in everything. Even outside her room, there was a space prepared so that someone could stay nearby in case she needed anything. For us, this was a sign of care and attentiveness. But for her, it felt overwhelming. She felt disturbed by it. What for us was hospitality, for her felt like intrusion.

In that moment, we see something important. Different cultures express care in different ways. In some places, love is shown through closeness, presence, and constant accompaniment. In other places, love is expressed through respect for space, quietness, and not imposing oneself on others. Neither is wrong, but both need to be understood.

This brings us to something deeper that I am also learning here with you. When Jesus says, “I am the way,” he is not only speaking to individuals. He is speaking to a community that is trying to find its direction. The disciples themselves were not yet united. They did not fully understand Jesus. They did not always see things the same way. And yet, Jesus gathered them and slowly formed them into a people who would walk together.

Perhaps this is where we honestly find ourselves as a chaplaincy. We are still learning what it means to be in relationship with one another, not only between priest and people, but also among ourselves as a community. At times, it feels like the relationships are still forming. At times, we may not yet share the same sense of what is good for our church, or what our real challenges are. We may not yet see the same direction, the same priorities, or even the same hopes. And because of this, growth can feel slow, or even difficult.

But the Gospel today gives us hope. Jesus does not wait for everything to be clear before he says, “I am the way.” He does not wait for the disciples to be perfectly united. He speaks into their confusion, their differences, and even their lack of understanding. And he invites them, not first to agree on everything, but to walk with him.

Perhaps that is also our invitation today. Not to force immediate unity, and not to pretend that everything is already clear, but to begin, or to continue, the journey of walking together. To slowly build relationship, to listen more deeply to one another, and to recognize that we may not yet fully know each other, but we can begin.

Because “the way” is not something we decide on our own. The way is Christ himself. And when we follow him, we are not only led individually, but we are also gathered into a shared journey.

“In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places.” This is not only a promise about the future. It is also a vision of the kind of community we are called to become. A community where there is room for different ways of expressing care, room for different cultures, and room for different rhythms of life, but still one people, learning to walk together in Christ.

So today, as we hear again the words of Jesus, “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” we are invited not only to follow Christ, but to walk with one another. To learn from each other, to grow in understanding, and even when we sometimes feel lost, whether as shepherds or as sheep, to trust that Christ is already among us, patiently guiding us, until we find the way together. Amen.