

Go With The Territory

Have you ever had the experience of feeling far from home? Have you ever found yourself disoriented in a new, unfamiliar place?

Incoming freshmen often find themselves “disoriented” upon arrival at college, far from the familiarity of home. Travelers to a foreign country, when confronted by a different language and culture, are sometimes overwhelmed by a sense that “we’re not in Kansas anymore!”

Today’s gospel has Jesus leading his disciples into the region on Tyre and Sidon. Today, that area is roughly equivalent to the region of southern Lebanon, north of the Israeli border.

This is unfamiliar territory. It doesn’t resemble Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth at all. People here speak a different language. They follow a different religion. They have a different history, different customs.

Along the way, Jesus and his band of disciples meet a woman in distress. (Matthew 15:21-28)

She is in the midst of a great personal crisis. Her daughter is in the grip of a dark force that has upended her life. She is desperate for help.

Her great need is matched by great faith. She trusts that Jesus can help her. Her trust leads her to an encounter that is healing. The darkness that burdened her daughter is lifted. She is freed of her bondage. And Jesus marvels at resilient faith, even in a strange, faraway land.

It isn't an exaggeration to say that we are living through "strange" times. It is as if over the past six months we have left the familiarity of what seemed normal.

And now, like Jesus' disciples, we are being led into strange, new "territory."

But Christ has always been leading his church into new territories. That foray into the region of Tyre and Sidon was the beginning of a two thousand year adventure, of which we are a part.

Like Jesus and the disciples, in this uncharted "territory" of a "new normal" we will encounter men and women of great faith, resilient faith.

Their trust in God to help them pull through, will help us pull through. When we become disoriented these faith-filled companions will help us to regain our bearings.

We find this sturdy faith gathering our communities at the table of the Eucharist as it empowered our ancestors to navigate the challenges of other times, other eras.

But the gospel seems to hint that we will also discover resilient faith in unexpected, surprising places. Upon finding it we too, like Jesus, will marvel at having privileged to have witnessed an energy that propels a life to overcome every dark force.

Be sure to invite these faith-filled souls into the daily unfolding of your life. *Who* we surround ourselves with has a tremendous impact upon how we face our day, our future.

“Faith is the bridge between where you are and where God is taking you.”

Pray for the grace to walk confidently through all the new territories and “new normals” that lie ahead.

Father Steven Labaire