

The Journey

If I asked you this morning, "How's your life going?" what would you answer?

I imagine that you would tell me about successes in your job, or your amazing children, or your comfortable home, or even your delightful holiday trip. Some of you might tell me about the Strikes at the Port, or at Telus—others might mention concerns about terrorism or world issues. Still others might mention worries about getting older and older by the day. And these are all significant answers.

But not the real answers.

Because when I asked you "How's your life going?" I was asking about your Real Life—the reason why you are alive at all, the Real Point of your Life.

Under the "noise of our day to day lives," under all the issues and concerns and successes of our daily lives, there is our Real Life—our Life with God—our "becoming what we are intended to be." That's our Real Life.

Real Life is "becoming," not "doing"; it's defined in "relationships," not in accumulated things. When you and I stand before God at the end of our life on earth, He is not going to ask about the size of our houses, or the number of our grandchildren, or the cost of our toys—He is going to ask us how much we love Him, how closely we have walked with Jesus, how much we have grown in the Holy Spirit.

Real Life is more easily expressed as:

Growing in the Spirit—Achieving your Destiny—Becoming a Saint—As the Pilgrimage of Life—

As the journey to Glory.

So, when I ask you, "how's your Life going?" I am really asking "How are you doing on your journey?"

Of course, without Jesus, there is no journey. Without Christ, we have no Pilgrimage. Without the Cross, there is no Becoming. The Way of the Cross is the Way of Life. By His Blood we are healed, says St. Paul. It is Jesus who has opened the door for us to the Father; it is the Lord who invites us on our journey to Become the Saints that God has called us to become. His Sacrifice has opened to us the Way of Life, a new and glorious relationship with the Father, a relationship that brings us Eternal Life.

In the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Jesus is "our Pioneer who has gone before us," opening the Way to Real Life, and marking the trail for us to follow.

Let me illustrate:

Imagine the journey of Life as a Path from here to Heaven, the Narrow Way as Jesus taught. That path is littered with boulders and bordered on either side with muddy ditches. The task of life is to journey along that Path, until we arrive at our Destiny, the Heart of God.

The boulders that we encounter on the path are there to help us grow. They provide the Spiritual Exercises that help us grow and increase our strength and experience.

The muddy ditches that line the Path are ditches of sin—and at first, they look more attractive than the boulder strewn Path. It is tempting to stop walking, to step off the Path, and wallow in the beautiful mud. At first, it is easier and more fun to enjoy the mud—lots of our friends are already there, and they encourage us to stay. Some people even stay there all their lives. You see, it is easier to wallow in the mud of self-centredness, than to walk the Path of Spiritual Growth. I imagine we all have been there from time to time, so we know.

But there comes a time when we discover that wallowing in the mud loses its appeal. We long again for the Pathway—we long for the excitement and achievement of the journey to God. But we find that we cannot climb out of the ditch without help. We got in easy enough but getting out is a different matter. And so, we turn back to Christ—we confess our sin and ask for His help—and He reaches down, pulls us out of the mud, cleans us off, and invites us to continue our journey with Him.

That is when we learn that we are not alone in our journey—Jesus is with us. He hears our Confession and brings Forgiveness; He feeds us with the Blessed Sacrament at the Eucharist so that we are strong enough for the journey; He reminds us of the Holy Spirit that was given to us at Baptism and Confirmation, so that we are guided on our journey. Without the Blessed Sacrament, we would have no strength to continue, and would come to a Spiritual halt. Without the Confession and Forgiveness, we would never be able to get out of the ditches. Without the Sacrament of Holy Unction, we would never find true Healing. Without Jesus, we would never succeed in our Pilgrimage. That is why we need the Lord; for He is our Pioneer as well as our Saviour.

As we journey on, we find that we are not alone—there are lots of fellow Pilgrims along the Way. They are the Church, our brothers and sisters. We encourage each other, teach each other, share with each other what we have learned. And we grow together. The priests of the Church guide us and bring us the Blessed Sacrament. The Real Life of a Christian is not a solitary existence, but like growth in a Family. We need each other, and we help each other. And day by day, sometimes faster sometimes slower, we make progress—we discover that we are being changed—changed from self-centred pleasure-seeking creatures into God-centred loving Saints. That's the destiny that the Lord has for each of us—and He will not rest until we become the Saints that He intended we should be, even from the Creation of the world.

So, we return to my original question: “How’s your Real Life going?” Are you moving happily along the Path towards the Lord, or are you sitting on a rock in the middle of the path daydreaming? If so, it is time to get up, and continue the journey with Jesus. Are you stuck in the mud of the ditch? If so, it is time to confess your sin, and ask Jesus to pull you from the ditch, knock the mud off, and get you on your way again. It matters not where you are along the Path—it only matters that you are moving ahead. And reaching out to help others in their journey. Your Real Life, your journey, is really all that counts—as St. Paul said: “ For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as garbage, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him ...”

Best of all, our journey of Life has a Destiny, there is an End to our Holy Pilgrimage. It ends in Heaven, in the very Heart of God. Our journey with Jesus leads us to our Destiny, a Destiny won on the Cross of Christ for us, where the angels sing and the Saints praise, and the Glory of the Father ever shines.

To be with God for all eternity is our Destiny if we will only persist until the end. So never give up, never give up—your Spiritual journey, your Real Life, your “Becoming the Saint to which you were called.” For the Grace of God is our prize, the Love of God is our Joy, and the Happiness of God will fill us with Eternal Life. Amen.