Second Sunday in Ordinary Time: 1/15/23—5:00 PM, 7:30 and 9:30 AM

I have here a compass. A compass tells us which way is North. North by the way is in this direction. Now if North is the way we want to go and need to go, what sense does it make to go any other direction? Just because I might think that North is in that direction rather than this direction as it truly is doesn’t make it so. To get where I need to go, however, I need to humble enough to follow true North and not my prefer-red North. If I’m not humble enough to follow true North, I will become hopelessly lost. Simply put, Jesus came into this world to be our spiritual compass to show us the way to his Father, to the One who is Life, Love, and Joy itself. Yet are we humble enough to follow the way Jesus directs us so to find his Father?

One way to remind ourselves that Jesus came to be our compass is the word “Lord” (used 9 times today). Last week, along with eight other parishioners, I was at the SEEK Conference at America’s Center, a truly wonderful experience. A couple of the speakers quoted the great British author C. S. Lewis who famously said that there are only three options when it comes our understanding of Jesus, that he was either a lunatic, a liar, or Lord, in other words, that he was a man who was crazy who claimed to be God, or that he was the teller of one of the biggest lies in all of time, or that he was who he said he was, the true Son of God and Lord. We are very familiar with the statement, as St. Paul puts it so simply in his letter to the Philippians (2:11), that “Jesus Christ is Lord!,” but what Bishop Robert Barron regularly points out is that those were treasonous words in the Roman world because every true Roman knew that Caesar was Lord. The word “Lord” meant the one who had the power to give life and to take life, and every pagan Roman knew that the only person who had that power was the Roman emperor whom the Romans saw as a god. For the Christians to say that the Roman emperor was not Lord but that “Jesus Christ is Lord” was a death sentence. In fact, that was one of the three reasons why the Christians were so hated and horribly persecuted by the Romans was because they were seen as atheists in that they denied the divinity of the Roman emperor. The other two reasons were because the Romans saw the Christians as cannibals because they talked about eating flesh and drinking blood and because they were seen as incestuous in that they referred to each other as brothers and sisters, but first and foremost reason was the Christians denial of the divinity of the Roman emperor.

A comparable way for us to say the same thing, that Jesus Christ is Lord and that he is the compass of my life is that very familiar phrase we find in John 14 where Jesus speaks as himself as “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” While it is very easy for us to say that “Jesus Christ is Lord,” that “Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” that Jesus Christ is my spiritual compass. the bigger challenge we face is whether the way we are living our lives in a way that gives proof to those statements.

In this past Monday’s Post-Dispatch, there was an article about the religious denominations of the members of the current US Congress. The article points out that *“nearly 88% of the members of Congress identify themselves as Christian”* with 76% of Democrats and 99% of Republicans claiming to be Christians. 88%, wow! Yet do those members of Congress really give proof of their Christian faith by the stances they take and the way they speak to and about one another? Sadly, no. If anything, they show us how not to act as Christians. But while it’s easy to point the finger of blame and hypocrisy at them, are we any different, letting our belief in Jesus’ lordship be just words? Again so often and so sadly, no.

If we really believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that Jesus is our spiritual compass, then we need to let Jesus be the Lord of everything in our lives, letting be the Lord of our sexuality, of our marriages, of how we spend our money, of our politics, of how we drive our cars, of how we treat other people, of how we speak to each other, in other words, of everything in our lives.

One little extra thought: at last week’s SEEK Conference, one speaker shared with us a prayer he recites regularly in order to let Jesus more and more to be his compass, to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life, to be the Lord of his life. He regularly prays, “Jesus, more of You and less of me!” Isn’t that the critical ingredient, the secret sauce, we need in order to let Jesus to be the Lord of our lives, letting him be the Way, the Truth, and the Life for us, letting him be our spiritual compass, “Jesus, more of You and less of me!” “Jesus, more of You and less of me!” “Jesus, more of You and less of me!”