**21 Pentecost, October 21, 2012; Mark 10: 35-45 The Rev. Mary S. Trainor**

A couple of weeks ago, I went to an evening talk given by a Wisconsin author of a book about a 4000 mile road trip he went on a few years back. He shared about his adventure to an eager audience. He had interesting stories about people he met while camping in various Wal Mart parking lots and while getting lost. Think back on road trips you have taken in your life, or road trips you are dreaming about taking. Road trips are a memorable part of our lives. Humans have always liked road trips - why road trips go way back to the Roman Empire - in 500 B.C! Psychologist Carl Jung identified the road trip as a **"persistent element of human culture**." We associate road trips with driving on highways to fun destinations, vacation, truck stops, visiting friends and family. Road trips can also be to meetings. In the past couple of days, three of us have been on a road trip to Manitowoc, where our annual Diocesan Convention was held. I want to thank – on behalf of all of you your delegates Ron Stezenski and Marlene Brown, who served with me at Convention. At Convention, there was much business to attend to, for in a way, the whole diocese is on a road trip too: there remains a long way to go in our work together for the Lord.

In today’s gospel we see Jesus on a road trip. A verse before our Gospel passage today says, ***“They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of him.”*** Jesus' road trip was walking, it was dusty and long; sore feet and no McDonalds to stop at along the way. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem: the journey to the cross. This was foremost on His mind, and He was teaching, preparing the disciples for His death. In fact, this road trip is the most memorable ever taken by anyone; Jesus' is known as "**The Way**." In John 14:6, Jesus says, ***"I am the way, and the truth, and the life."***

In the Gospel, Jesus is not alone -- the disciples are with Him on the road trip. The disciples' road trip was a journey toward greater faith; we are on that same journey. We witnessed them experiencing some twists and bumps along the road in today's Gospel; these twists and bumps came from their being ambitious and self-centered. Jesus called them out on this: that is not the right direction, not the way, Jesus teaches. On our spiritual road trip, we are more like these disciples than we care to admit; we can take that wrong way too, we can get wrapped around our own selves instead of following Jesus. The beginning of getting on the right road, on "***the way"*** is to recognize our need for a Savior. The theologian Henri Nouwen put it this way, "**When we are honest with ourselves about our wounded condition, then we can begin a journey toward wholeness in Christ."** If we set out on our spiritual journey in a state of pride instead of humility, we will go the wrong direction.

Our Gospel lesson today ends with Jesus teaching about that in these words: Jesus tells us that he ***"came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. "*** What this means is that Jesus' death does something; it secures our release … but a release from what? A release from death! In other words, because of the ransom Jesus paid with his life, we are saved. It is more than just an inspiring example or a martyr's tragic protest against an unjust system. Through His death Jesus made us acceptable to God, He reconciled us to God! And, this involves ongoing action -- Jesus pours new life into us! Jesus 'paid the price' so we can receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. You hear about this frequently in Eucharistic Prayer A (BCP p. 362):  *“Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all."* It is one thing to hear the words, it is an entirely different thing to live in, through, and by these words of profound truth. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus plants new life and hope in us.

 **The road trips you and I are on in our lives, the road trips our Diocese and our Church are on, are given meaning** **by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross**. It's the most important road trip of our lives, going with Jesus. Our road trip, spiritual journey, contains twists and bumps -- but has only one destination, one leader, one Savior. He is "THE Way," and He is with us as we navigate the twists and bumps. The amazing thing about traveling with Jesus is that even though we aren’t there yet –we are treated like royalty by God, even with all our warts and blemishes. It’s not about what you’ve done or what you’ve accomplished; it’s about what Jesus has done and what he’s accomplished and what you believe. Jesus accepts us as we are along the way, wherever we are, and breathes new life into us. Jesus gave His life so that we might be saved. Here at St. John's, we can be so thankful because we have so many opportunities on our road trip to grow in our faith, to stay on the right path: our worship and prayer times, our Christian education classes, our Bible studies, our new library, our outreach to those in need. So, keep moving along the road ..keep moving, staying close to Jesus, the Way. Amen.