

The homing spirit

Some months ago, seeing that I would be showing off my country to some Americans, I decided to purchase a sat. map. I plugged in the destinations to which we intended to visit and we were guided there. The device even beeped to warn me of the changes in speed limits along the way and where there might be speed cameras. With an easy mind and a guiltless conscience, we arrived at our destinations and home again without hassle, error or wrong turn. We really enjoyed our directed, pain-free travel.

I wonder what would life be like if we had a built-in human sat. map to guide us on life's journey. Maybe, in some mysterious sense, we do have built in a homing spirit that directs us through the complexities of life to the afterlife. Some might call it the direction of the Holy Spirit; others may call it a homing instinct built in all of us by the Creator.

Now that I am retired and back home, I have some time to reflect on the meaning of "home." I find it interesting that when we are away from home, we are "homesick." Such homesickness, reminds us of an aching heart that is still incomplete. When we are home, usually we feel safe, secure, and at peace.

It seems it all begins with our mother's womb. There, for our nine months of development, we have a home. We are nourished and taken care of. We do not wish to leave that home. Even when we are forced to leave it, we cry as we have to leave one home behind and get used to another; trade in security for insecurity.

It seems ironic that there is a backward and a forward dimension to the idea of home. We all come from a home, whether it was good or bad. We all talk about our experience of home, often with a sense of nostalgia, even though, often, this nostalgia might engender disappointment as well as satisfaction.

Even the sacred story revolved around the idea of home. Even though we are born into a temporary world, something deeper reminds us that a more spiritual home beckons us to embrace it. We discover, like St. Augustine, that our hearts are restless until they rest in God. Even Jesus when he left his heavenly home to redeem us, his mission was not complete until he returned home, ascending to the Father.

I am always fascinated by the universal appeal of the fantasy film, "The Wizard of Oz." Its appeal crosses all ages groups, backgrounds and nationalities. Its story provokes something deep in the human psyche. Dorothy's long, adventurous trip down the Yellow Brick Road is something that everyone loves to read and watch. It is a story that touches all of us. There is a better place somewhere out there - somewhere over the rainbow. Most viewers are able to relate to a character, whether it is the Scarecrow who needs a brain, the Tin Man who needs a heart, or the Cowardly Lion, who needs courage. Once they find their need answered, they feel complete. The obvious message of the story is that there is no place like home.

Have you ever noticed that a journey away from home, for example visiting someone or going on vacation, the journey seems to take longer and even kids, ask their proverbial question: "Are we there yet?" Ironically, the trip home seems much shorter, buoyed by the excitement and thrill of getting to a familiar place called "home."

It is often suggested that the hardest journey is not a journey to a place but a journey to a space that is within where one hears the promptings of the Spirit whom Jesus sent so that we might not be orphans but instead have an advocate to guide us on our journey home, prompted by the gift of her God-given inner compass.

Ironically, I write this column while I sit at home in my rocking chair with my laptop on my lap, as I look out at the now familiar surroundings that encompass a temporary home environment while, at the same time, challenging me to relate more deeply to my inner homing spirit.