

### Monroe IHM Liturgy – May 3/Easter V

Acts 2:14, 36-41; 1 Peter 2:20-25; John 14:1-10

You've probably heard the story—maybe it's true, maybe not—about the U.S. naval ship and the Canadian authorities off the coast of Newfoundland.

#### The Americans radio:

*"Please divert your course 15 degrees north to avoid a collision."*

#### The Canadians respond:

*"Recommend you divert YOUR course 15 degrees south."*

**Americans:** *This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.*

**Canadians:** *No. I say again, you divert YOUR course.*

**Americans:** *This is the aircraft carrier USS Lincoln, the second largest ship in the United States' Atlantic fleet. We are accompanied by three destroyers, three cruisers and numerous support vessels. I demand that YOU change your course 15 degrees north, or countermeasures will be undertaken to ensure the safety of this ship.*

#### And the Canadians reply:

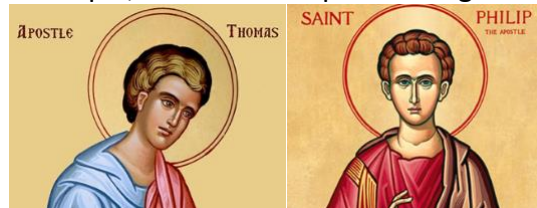
*"This is a lighthouse. Your call."*



Course corrections aren't easy. They can be inconvenient, humbling—even a little embarrassing. But sometimes they're the difference between staying on course... and crashing into something that isn't going to move. What strikes me about today's

scriptures is that right in the center of the story—people are asked to change course.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the early Church gets it wrong. People are being overlooked—the widows aren't being cared for. That's not a small mistake. That's a failure of charity and justice. And what do they do? They don't make excuses. They don't blame someone else. They face it—and they fix it. They reorganize. They appoint people. They make sure it doesn't keep happening. The first Christian community wasn't perfect. But it was accountable. And that's the difference. We're not defined by our mistakes and failings. But what we do after them—that begins to define us. And then in the Gospel, even the disciples don't get it.



Thomas the Apostle doesn't understand where Jesus is going. Philip the Apostle doesn't understand who Jesus really is. They're confused. They miss what's right in front of them. And Jesus doesn't throw them out. He corrects them—and keeps them close. Being wrong didn't disqualify them. But refusing to listen—that would have.

I recently read a unique poem by W.S. Merwin entitled: "To the Mistakes." In a humble but lighthearted way, the poet addresses his mistakes and failings directly: ***You are the ones who were not recognized in time, although you may have been waiting in full sight in broad day.*** Then he admits: ***You are the ones I must have needed, the ones who led me. In spite of all that was said about you, you placed my footsteps on the only way.*** That's honest.

Because a mistake can do one of two things: It can become a **stumbling block**—something you trip over again and again. Or it can become a **steppingstone**—something you actually learn from.



And the difference is simple—but not easy: Do you face it? Or do you keep repeating it? So maybe the appropriate question isn't: **Have I made mistakes?** We all know the answer to that. The real question is: **What am I doing with them now?** Am I owning them? Am I learning from them? Am I becoming someone different because of them? Because that's where real change begins. The word the Church uses is **metanoia**—conversion. A change of mind. A change of direction. But for many people, conversion sounds like a single dramatic moment— a turning point where everything changes at once.

For many of you, it hasn't looked like that. It's looked like years... decades... of small, faithful course corrections. Not once. But over and over again. In community. In ministry. In prayer. Not because you got it wrong the first time— but because life keeps unfolding, and God keeps inviting you deeper. So maybe, at this stage of life, *metanoia* isn't about starting over. It's about staying open. Open to being surprised. Open to seeing something differently. Open to letting go of what no longer gives life. Because even now—God isn't finished. The early Christian community had to change course. The disciples had to grow

into understanding. And the Church itself has had to do the same.

At the Second Vatican Council—especially in *Lumen Gentium*— the Church described itself in a striking way: **Holy... and yet always in need of purification – semper reformanda.** Always on the way. Always being renewed. Not a finished product. But a pilgrim people. And that kind of humility—that willingness to keep listening, to keep learning, to keep adjusting course— that's not weakness. That's faithfulness. Later this month, on May 29<sup>th</sup>, I've been asked to lead a day of reflection and dialogue marking the 60th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. I've titled it: **A Reckoning Seasoned with Gratitude.** Because that's what this moment calls for. **Gratitude** for the courage, the vision, the faith that brought the Church to that moment of renewal in 1966. And a kind of **reckoning**—not in a negative sense— but an honest look at what still calls for growth. Where the Spirit might still be asking us to listen more deeply... to see more clearly.... to change course, even now. The Council was not an ending. It was a beginning. And in many ways, we're still living into it. So I want to invite you—not just to remember it— but to engage it again. To bring your experience... your wisdom... your questions... to a conversation that is still unfolding.

### *A Reckoning Seasoned with Gratitude*



from Collegiality .... to Synodality

Because the Church doesn't renew itself in **theory**. It renews itself through **people**— people like you— who have spent a lifetime saying yes and are still willing to listen for what that “yes” is asking now. And maybe that's where we leave it: Course corrections aren't easy. But they are how we stay on the way. And the God who has been faithful through every step so far isn't finished yet.



*John Kasper, OFS*