

What troubles your heart today?

Perhaps you are worried about your health and doctor appointments, and you are eager for answers. I am concerned especially for all the people who have no coverage. I am concerned about people's mental health, and how unavailable care is for those who need it. Perhaps what troubles your heart is the difficulty of making your money go further. The list seems endless. Today, especially I am concerned about the stage 4 diagnosis of a family member. And while Jesus says "don't let your hearts be troubled", our hearts are still troubled.

I'm with Thomas here, I do not know the way to an untroubled heart!

Let's be honest, if we have any empathy or compassion in our bones, we cannot look at the pain of the world today, the suffering of a loved one, or our own wounds and hurts, let alone the violent circumstances in our world and NOT have troubled hearts. If my loved ones are suffering and my heart is not troubled, I would be hard-hearted at best or a sociopath at worst! The bottom line is, if we LOVE, our hearts are always involved and our hearts will always feel something.

It was the night of the last supper. Jesus had announced his departure from this world and his upcoming death. Feet had been washed. Judas had left the table and had gone to enact his betrayal. Peter would soon deny Jesus three times. Thomas was confused and asks, “How can we know the way?” And Philip can’t see what is right in front of him and rather blindly suggests: “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.”

And in the midst of it all Jesus says, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” We know he’s serious, but it still makes us shake our heads in wonder. Does he not know what is happening in our lives and our world? There is no “on-off” switch for troubled hearts! The disciples could all see that their world was imploding. And You want us to what?

How do we begin to make sense of today’s gospel in a world whose heart is constantly troubled? It’s not hard to understand why this text is so often used in a burial liturgy. Death troubles our hearts and we want to find some balance and to restore some stability.

This text, however, is about more than just the end of our lives and the after-life. It speaks to the very circumstances that trouble our hearts today.

The unspoken question here is this: When it feels as if everything is collapsing around us, is there room for my broken heart? Is there a place where you can unload your burden and regain your balance? Can we and will we be able to find our way again? right here? right now? Or is this promise only good after we are dead?

I think you all already know the answer!!

What if not letting our hearts be troubled begins with the question that Thomas asks when he says, “Lord we do not know where you are going?” Where do we go when it seems everything is collapsing?

When our hearts are troubled it is time to “re-center”. Re-centering doesn’t mean we leave our troubles behind. It doesn’t mean that our problems will all be fixed. What it actually means is taking the time to remember that our lives are tethered to something greater than ourselves.

In baptism we were tethered to Christ Jesus. He is at the center of all things. And in good times and in bad, he is at work preparing a place, and opening a way for us... making room.

Think of it this way: the many dwelling places Jesus has made for us are made up of the myriad ways God meets us with mercy and forgiveness, justice and generosity, compassion, healing, beauty, wisdom, hope, courage, joy, intimacy and love. Aren't all of these the truth Jesus calls us to seek and to share? Then perhaps these are also the places where we can dwell, for a short time, where we each have our own room with our own space to find rest and comfort and to reconnect and recenter our lives? It makes me think of the little quip: "If God seems far away, guess who moved?" When we are deeply troubled these are the spaces we need most, but are most inclined to avoid... or are too blind to see.

The good news is we cannot fathom what God can do, but Jesus is not speaking of an actual room with a bed and a closet, and dressers for each and every one of us in heaven! At least, I hope not. He is speaking of

something else, something that will ease his friends cares and concerns in their most difficult moment. In our most difficult moments!

Jesus always meets us in the present, and only speaks to real needs. God only heals where we are truly hurt, and sees where we need him most in the moment.

- Have you found the place God has prepared for you to process the sadness you feel?
- Where is the safe place you can go to deal with heart-gripping fear?
- As you pray and attempt to recenter your life in Christ, is there a place, at the waterfront maybe, or in the bath, where you go to remember your baptism and find again the assurance of God's forgiveness and your salvation, given to you at your baptism?
- Perhaps the place Jesus has prepared for you to find strength when you are weak is on a hike, or at an appointment with a spiritual

director or a therapist or a doctor? Or a heart to heart with a friend.

There are many rooms where we can go, when we are feeling worn and burnt-out, or in need of more compassion and the inspiration to continue to give.

These places all begin at the same place: centered in our Lord and Savior Jesus the living Christ. Only there, do we find the grace that enables us to respond to life with wisdom, and humor, and healing and ... well, grace. Christ is the only safe dwelling place for troubled hearts. He is both the Way and the Destination. So claim his promise: "I will give you rest." In Christ alone, we regain our center, balance is restored, and our troubled hearts find truth and life and peace.

Thanks be to God.