

As part of survival training in the military, we were taught basic land navigation skills.

In the training phase, we would count off steps between posts in the ground, and then calculate the distance we were traveling with each step.

Before we headed out anywhere, we would figure out how many steps distant we were going, and collect a small stone for each 10 or 20 steps. We'd take bearings based on a compass or the position of the sun or the north star; and then head out. Every so many steps, you'd drop a pebble until your pocket was empty. At that point you were supposed to be wherever it was you were going.

We each took turns leading the squadron in point-to-point navigation. And for some reason, it was decided that I was the best at navigation.

We headed out at night, and we walked. Every so many steps I'd drop a pebble. All was going well until I sort of zoned out. Then I realized that I had lost track of where we were, not to mention where we were supposed to be.

In other words - I'd gotten us all lost ... in the desert ... in the middle of the night.

Not certain that I wanted to be killed and eaten by my classmates in survival training; I kept it to myself ... and I started praying. I stopped, looked at the map, and made a wild guess - head north. I found the north star, and started leading the group again.

By some small miracle, we ended up right where we belonged - and were the only group that made it without being brought in by an instructor.

In today's Gospel reading from Matthew, we hear the account of Jesus' first preaching of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus gives two very specific directions in this reading.

In the first part, Jesus says: *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

Repent, in the Greek, means to turn your mind around. I’d guess we all have aspects of our lives where we’d like to turn things around. I’d imagine quite a few of us have made New Year’s Resolutions, about things that we’d like to change about ourselves.

The second direction Jesus gives is when he says: *“Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.”*

And in this direction, He calls the disciples, and us as well, to follow Him.

There are countless voices in the world calling out to us to turn toward them, or to follow them. They promise an easy life or worldly pleasure or something they think might sell us on following them.

But those voices aren’t Jesus Christ. And He offers us Eternal Life in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is THE WAY, THE TRUTH, and THE LIFE.

We need to make sure that we make Him OUR WAY, OUR TRUTH, and OUR LIFE.

Any other way, any other truth, any other life - and whatever we’re following after is just a distraction, a diversion, a false way.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ – let us make a firm resolution to ask God’s Divine Assistance to turn ourselves around ... and to make a solid choice to follow Jesus Christ ... every moment of every day.

And wherever we may find resistance to that turning; or wherever we may find that we are more comfortable following ourselves or some other way – let us REPENT of that, and give it over to Christ ... and ask Him to be OUR WAY, OUR TRUTH, and OUR LIFE.