Navigating Ordinary Time

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By Lucia A. Silecchia

"Navigating home," she said in that assertive, mechanical voice of a well-used GPS system. She calculated the way that would route the car homeward, chiming in from time to time to offer directions and guidance on the way back home.

There is something oddly comforting in both her utter confidence and in the familiarity of that destination called "home." I know she is not truly a human guide and her instructions are not imbued with any human loving care. Yet, this small screen with the robotic voice is a reminder to be grateful for the many people in our lives who help us navigate our way home.

Of course, there are those people who, literally, help us navigate home. Anyone who has landed late in a hometown airport or pulled into a deserted train station knows the joy of seeing the familiar face of a family member or friend who waves hello, grabs the heavy luggage, and drives the weary traveler home. Anyone who has had a rough day at school, on the playing field, or at a first dance knows that relief that comes from seeing mom or dad drive up in the family car to go home. Anyone who has endured a stay in the hospital or an accident or injury also knows that blessed feeling that only comes from being taken home to the peaceful serenity of a familiar bed.

There are also those who help us find ourselves again when we have lost our way in life. When our hearts are broken and life seems a stunning struggle, they help us navigate home to peace. When dreams are dashed or friends betray us, they help us navigate our way back to hope. When success, good fortune and strength distract us, they help us navigate our way back to a spirit of gratitude and compassion. When we make the mistakes we find hard to forgive, they help us navigate our way back to mercy and gentleness. When we start to pursue what lacks authentic value and meaning, they help us navigate back to the true, beautiful and good.

If we have these loving navigators in our lives, we are fortunate.

However, if we are truly blessed we also have those who help us navigate our way through this life to our true, eternal home. As the years pass, I am more aware of these people – and how much I need them. They are the ones who, through word and example, remind those they know that there is a true home that follows this life, and they help to show the way. These are the people who remind us of what it means to live a good life, how important it is to know, love and serve God, and how beautiful it is to live in joyful hope of what is to come. They do not always announce, as GPS does, that they are "navigating home." Yet, those who live their lives with fidelity and good example are doing exactly that.

As I think about all those I know, I can think of many who have been fearless, kind and good navigators to me. Some are saints who have gone before me, who I will never know in this life, but whose presence and intercession is a true gift. Others have been family, friends, kind strangers and loving mentors whose wisdom and love has accompanied me in the path of life. I am grateful to them because, at the end of any journey, there is no place to be that is better than home. That is never more true than when the journey is the one that leads from this life into the next. Often, the things of this life – both good and bad – are distractions from the way home. They can be detours and roadblocks to that way home, and they can take us to destinations other than home. To all those who, each and every day, help me along the way – thank you for helping me navigate my way through ordinary time.

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