

Last Saturday morning I rode my bike out to Longview Lake with several parishioners. Out on the path one of our group stopped to pump up his front tire, so I pulled around to wait. Suddenly three women jogged up the path toward us and as they passed I overheard one say to another, "Wasn't that Father Turner?" They all turned around and I faintly recognized the one in the middle. Her friend said, "She's the bride for the wedding tonight." Gwen had convinced her five bridesmaids to go jogging together the morning of the wedding. Well, sort of together. We ran into the other three a half mile down the road. They were walking together, and waiting for the bride to turn around.

I had to hand it to 'em, though. Friendship can place strange demands on us, and they gave this a try. But other times we reach a crossroads in a relationship and we cannot go on.

The disciples reach a crossroads with Jesus in today's Gospel, and I tell you, I bet Jesus saw it coming. I bet Jesus saw them drifting away. There's a mistake we frequently make in this situation. If someone we love starts drifting away, we think the way to recall them is to reveal something personal. We may reveal our love, our fears, our bodies. We may reveal the little regard we hold for our morals. What Jesus reveals is his body and blood; he reveals the Eucharist. He reveals he is the bread of life. In some ways it was a mistake to say that; it was a mistake to reveal something so personal to people who were wavering--because many of them said, "This is a hard saying." And they left him, never to return.

Then he realized he blew it, and he wonders now will the whole thing come unravelled. Pitifully he turns to the Twelve--the Son of Man, afraid of emptiness--and a hollow voice rings from deep within, "Do you want to leave me too?" Peter opens his mouth, and as you know from reading the Gospels whenever Peter opens his mouth his foot goes right for it. But for once, Peter says the right thing. It's one for all and all for one--the 13 musketeers.

Why did they stay? Did they understand this teaching better than the rest? I doubt it. They stayed because they knew Jesus better than the rest. They were convinced that he was God's holy one. They could accept this bizarre teaching because their friendship was strong. Some couples stay together through what others divorce over because their friendship is so strong they tolerate the wierdness. Most of us would not be here today praying to a God who is so silent if our friendship with God was not strong. The deeper the relationship, the more tolerant we become.

Sometimes we separate at a crossroads from a relationship we once knew was good. We lose touch with an old friend. We stop going to Church so often. We can't figure out God any more. If it happens, it's a sign the relationship isn't all that strong. To make it stronger we begin by admitting who left whom at the crossroads.

Headline
Golby separated
leaders who left who behind