

We've all got to go on a journey. I've got to go on a journey in order to go on holiday and find refreshment for body, mind and soul. Some of us may be going on journeys to fulfil the next stage of our lives that we believe God has in mind for us. Many athletes and their supporters will be making the journey to London in order to compete for that elusive gold medal. Even to open a book and watch a film is of course to go on a journey, a journey into somebody else's mind and imagination.

Jesus takes the apostles on a journey in today's gospel. *'You must come away', he says, 'to some lonely place all by yourselves'...So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves.*

Most people's idea of a good holiday or of a happy and fulfilling life would not normally involve being alone or going to a lonely place. People without friends and partners are deemed to be a bit sad, missing out on some vital part of what it means to be human.

There is of course all the difference in the world between being alone and being lonely. Jesus took the apostles on this journey so they 'could be by themselves'. Jesus loved the crowds. He loved the whole of humanity. He knew he was their shepherd. But he also knew that he needed time to be with his immediate collaborators, away from all the distractions and activities of everyday life.

And as well as time with his friends and collaborators, he needed time with his God and Father. All journeys mean leaving the familiarities of everyday life behind and trying new relationships in a new and strange environment.

The struggle of the Olympic athlete to attain gold is his or her struggle alone and nobody else's. There may be thousands of people in the stadium and millions watching on the TV but in that struggle he or she is completely alone. My journey towards God is ultimately my journey and nobody else's. There may be millions and billions of people past and present on a similar journey but at some stage I myself have to make a conscious decision to embark on this journey. Nobody can make this decision for me. Nobody can make the journey for me. It's got to be my decision, my journey within the privacy and secrecy of my heart.

The wonderful thing is the moment we make that decision, the moment we embark on that journey, something remarkable happens.

We discover that it is actually somebody there already leading us on the journey. Jesus is the Good Shepherd leading us into the depths of God.

*Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me
to revive my drooping spirit.*

*He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name.*

*The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.*