

## Lost and Found

The well-known and popular broadcaster of the 1960s, Archbishop Fulton Sheen, was a speaker much in demand around the US in those days. He travelled to many places to give lectures. On one occasion he was trying to find the Town Hall in Philadelphia and lost his way. Being anxious as time was pressing he asked a group of boys playing at the street corner for directions. They told him how to get there and then asked: "What are you going there for?" Fulton Sheen replied: "I'm going to give a lecture." "On what?" they asked. "Boys, I'm going to talk on Heaven and how to get there. Would you like to come and find out?" They said: "No fear. You don't even know how to get to the Town Hall."

We all know the panicking experience of getting lost, especially when time is pressing. I remember once the anxiety I had when I was trying to get the ferry back from France and got lost in a network of side streets on the way. Luckily I just made it as they were about to draw up the ramp.

I was away for a few days this week with my friend Simon Thomson who is due to take up new duties as parish priest in Wokingham today. He was telling me that he was having dreams about getting ready for Mass and not being able to find the chalice and keeping the congregation waiting with all the panic and anxiety that goes with that. Just a few weeks before Johnpromise was having similar nightmares before taking up his new appointment about being at Mass and not being able to find his place in the missal. I, too, have had such dreams before my ordination and every time I am due to take up a new appointment. I guess it happens to most priests and I'm sure we've all had similar experiences if not in dreams then in reality about losing things or losing our place, mislaying our car keys or wondering where we last saw our passport.

We all lose things from time to time, sometimes very important things like the secret government papers left in a taxi, \$10,000 dollars in a box left on a shop counter, a prosthetic leg left on a bus or, most famous of all, perhaps, David Cameron's daughter left behind by him at a pub. The panic that accompanies the realisation of the loss is well illustrated by the woman who lost the small coin in the Gospel today. It wasn't, of course, the face value of the coin that made it so precious and its loss so traumatic, as what it stood for: her dowry worn as a part of a headband she would never have taken off even at night, like a wedding ring. She looks high and low and turns the house upside down and will not rest until she has found the coin.

With this, and the lovely story of the lost sheep, Jesus shows us how much God loves us that when we go astray he, too, will not rest until he has found us and drawn us back to him. He will leave no stone unturned in reaching out to those who turn away from him and reject him. Jesus is the living proof of this love of God for the lost. Tax

collectors, prostitutes and sinners were considered the lowest of the low in society in Jesus' day. No rabbi would dream of associating with them since they considered such people enemies of God and abandoned by him. Jesus proves this wrong and breaks that mould. As a Rabbi he readily, willingly and intentionally associates with these outcasts. It is these who need the physician, he says, and warns the self-righteous that these outcasts will go before them into heaven. As St Paul writes to Timothy in today's second reading: 'Here is a saying that you can rely on and nobody should doubt: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'. That's you and me and that's really good news. Depend on it!