

It is love that I desire; not victims. Hosea 6:3-6

So after the seasons of Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter have passed where does that leave us liturgically? It leaves us in what the Church calls "Ordinary Time" - which seems to say: right back where we started from, trekking our way through the long hot summer of history, laying one foot down in front of the other as we advance toward the autumn of our lives, toward uncertainties looming ahead like some dark horizon. Life for many of us is still a trek to somewhere if not territorial then somehow spiritual.

And we have many a story that tell of such migrations. For instance there's the famous trek of the Okies from the dustbowl of the 1930's toward what seemed like the Promised Land of California - as told by John Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Talk about uncertainties! Like the Hebrews of the biblical Exodus, these down-to-earth Americans were buffeted by hope one minute and confusion the next as they ran into people coming the other way saying they'd rather starve in Oklahoma among friends that starve in a hostile California. They had not been welcome there. Their used cars would break down; highway merchants behaved like highway bandits! Why carry on?

Of course, "why" can be the worst question to ask in a crisis. That's how Tom Joad felt at times. When Casey, the defrocked preacher, says, *Well - s'pose all these here folks . . . can't get no jobs out there*, Tom replies, *I'm jus' puttin' one foot in front a the other . . . This bearing went out . . . Now she's out an' we'll fix her. . . Ya see it? Well, that's the only . . . thing in this world I got on my mind*. Nor does Uncle John care much for speculation: *We're a-goin' there, ain't we? None of this here talk gonna keep us from goin' there. When we get there, we'll get there. When we get a job, we'll work . . . talk ain't gonna do no good no way*. But Casey, represents another dimension of ourselves that needs to see the big picture - what's the meaning of all those journeys of peoples past and present (and of you and me) down through the seemingly ordinary times of our lives. Casey thinks they add up: *They's stuff goin' on and they's folks doin' things. Them people layin' one foot down in front of the other, they ain't thinkin' where they're goin' . . . but they're all layin' 'em down in the same direction. . . An' if ya listen, you'll hear a movin', an' a sneakin', an a rustlin', an' - an' a res'lessness. They's stuff goin' on that the folks doin' it don't know nothin' about - yet. They's gonna come somepin outa all these folks goin' wes' - outa all their farms lef' lonely. They's gonna come a thing that's gonna change the whole country*.

As an ex-preacher Casey shares something of the hope expressed throughout the whole of our religion, a sense of the Holy Spirit working in history as quietly as the dawn, fashioning a world wherein mutual victimization has finally given way to a divine ethic of mutual mercy and love. May not the same Holy Spirit be driving the migrations of today that make headlines? The Okies only wanted to get from Oklahoma to California. Today such destinations are of far wider range in a much smaller world.

Of course hardships at home, along the way and hardships ahead can lead to despair. But Steinbeck has this way of signaling the presence of a divine *undercurrent* shaping our destiny, as when Mae, the waitress at a road stop, looks wistfully after a poor

family that's just left and asks the short order cook Al, *I wonder what they'll do in California?* *Who?* says Al. *Them folks that was just in.* says Mae. And when Al replies, *Christ knows*, **we** know he's not just uttering a profanity. Because **we** know that Christ does indeed know and he's let us know - profoundly – where all of humanity must be headed.