Life's Journey – Do we need GPS?

By Dr. John Smarrelli Jr.
President, Christian Brothers University

Having survived the hustle and bustle of holiday celebrations and travels I thought, "Wouldn't it be nice to have a GPS to help us to navigate life?" It is easy now, with the advent of global positioning systems, to find our way to new friends' homes, newly opened restaurants and out of the way destinations never before visited. At your request, a personalized roadmap is laid out in the simplest terms: left here, right in two miles, your destination is 0.4 miles on the left. The journey requires merely following simple instructions provided by a faceless voice, whose only agenda is that you arrive.

As Christian Brothers University comes alive at the start of a new semester with students and faculty returning refreshed and energized vibrantly embracing aspirations for the future, I was reminded that most of today's college students have never had to use an actual map. The coming generations will depend on GPSs and new advances to find their way through the physical landscape, just as the Magi depended on a star and a prophecy to locate the infant Jesus at His birth.

Student life typically culminates with a diploma, when families, professors, Brothers, peers and other guides look on with pride as each hardworking scholar reaches the destination of graduation. On May 14 when CBU holds its first-ever outdoor Commencement Ceremony on campus, new journeys will begin as students who have already begun to make a difference in the world, enter the workforce with vocations in science, engineering, business and the arts.

If life itself is a journey, beginning as we are welcomed into this world, then surely the destination is our eternal reward, as we are welcomed into the arms of the Father, having lived out our purpose here on earth. As our former students undertake their spiritual journeys toward everlasting life, who and what will guide their steps? There is no GPS made for navigating the traffic jams, other drivers, accidents and natural disasters of a journey of faith.

Consider a GPS devoted to directing us through the winding and uncertain topography of everyday life. Wouldn't that make life so much easier? Imagine never being lost _ knowing always exactly where you stood and how to reach your goals from your current location. There would be no anxiety or indecision, and much less inconvenience. That would be nice, but the problem with never being lost is that you never get an opportunity to find your way.

Fortunately, we have mentors, family members, friends, clergy, and members of religious communities to offer a multitude of counsel during difficult seasons, the aftermath of tragic events and times of important decisions. We also have as a guide, a time-tested and accurate map for life's journey, in the sacred scriptures. By studying and following the perfect instructions laid out before us, we can model our lives after our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and encourage others to do so as well. He serves as our real GPS; in this case, a Grace Positioning System.

As our guide, He always hears us, especially when we are lost. We need not fear a lost satellite connection, because He is with us always. There are no technical glitches, no misleading information about newly built roads. Even as we fail, usually daily, to live out life's journey according to His plan, in His grace we have the most comprehensive travel insurance available - at absolutely no cost.

To students who will graduate this May and the students who come after them, it is important to remember that while our compass may change, our technology may change and our community may change, God and His word never change. He has already provided a roadmap for joy, peace and success in life. To complete our journey, we simply need to follow His directions.