By Pat Haggerty

Do you remember what it was like on the first day of school each year? I had the opportunity to share in that sensation vicariously through my grandson this week. I was at his house while he was getting ready and preparing to take the bus on the first day of first grade. Fortunately, he was all smiles and very excited. He was wearing his new shirt, had a new haircut, and displayed a special name tag.

The name tag was more than that---it was a descriptor, a marker, a guide. On it was basic information to get him to school and back. It included his name, his teacher's name, his bus number, his grade, and his homeroom number. It was a bright spaceship hanging from a blue piece of yarn. Hopefully, it would serve as a fool-proof "badge" that would pave the way for him at the important parts of the day---his going and his coming.

That very enticing tag got me thinking. I thought of how important it was to Sam and to each child. I also thought of how the teacher had spent a lot of time preparing all of those tags for her class. She must have carefully selected the spaceship designs and spent much time writing out the information on each one.

As Christians, we don't go around wearing spaceship name tags to tell us where we are going, but we do have strong indicators that provide meaningful information to us on our spiritual journeys. Those indicators are given to us each week and come to us in the form of the readings from our Sunday liturgies. Do we place enough emphasis on the importance of those readings? I hope so! They are meant to serve as our "markers," our "guideposts," our "indicators." We need to use them as such. We need to refer to them often to give us the direction we need and to help us in our comings and goings.

Don't just let the readings wash over you on a Sunday and then dismiss them. Think about them, internalize them, and live them! The gospel of Mark last Sunday indicated: "Hear me, all of you, and understand (7:14)." Spend some time each week using the guides that have been given to us to help us find our way.