

## **FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

*Gospel: John 14:1-12*

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.

### **REFLECTION 1: JESUS, THE WAY, TRUTH AND LIFE**

Did you ever notice that people seem to read the bible a lot more as they grow older? Then it dawned on me that perhaps they were cramming for their final exam! In the Gospel for today, Jesus is preparing his disciples for their 'final exam'. He reassures them that they should not allow their hearts to be troubled and as they had faith in God they should also have faith in him. Jesus would come back again and take them to himself; so that where he was, they would also be there. Where I am going said Jesus, you know the way. The trouble was that they didn't know the way.

Today's Gospel (John 14: 1-12) is the final teaching that Jesus delivers to his disciples during the Last Supper. Many farewell addresses are to be found in the Bible. Shortly before their death, great leaders often delivered a farewell speech to those they were leaving behind. It looked to the future and gave advice as to how they were to live when their leader had passed on. For instance, on his deathbed, Jacob delivered a long farewell to his 12 sons, the Patriarchs, and predicts what the future will hold for them (Gen. 49). Jesus' farewell also looks to the future. He offers a message of comfort to those left behind. They are to trust in God as he did. They will be reunited in the Father's home. He comforts them by telling them that the accommodation in the Father's House will have many rooms, so they may not fear that they will be refused entry. When that place is prepared Jesus will return to take them with him. Thomas finds his voice and asks the question, 'if they don't know where Jesus is going, how could they find the way?'. Jesus replies with another of the great 'I am' sayings: 'I am the way, the truth and the life; no one can come to the Father except through me'. Just as Jesus is the gate that offers protection and freedom of movement for his flock to the pastures of eternal life, he is also the way to God. To have known Jesus is to have known the Father. This prompts another comment, this time from Philip - for Philip it would be enough just to see the Father.

The Jews believed that we humans could not see God; the sight was so powerful that they couldn't endure it and so God usually makes himself present through symbols like fire and thick cloud. Moses begged to see God but all he was allowed to see was God's back as he departed from the mountain (Ex: 33). Seen in this light, Philip's request that they be allowed to see the Father is breathtaking. But Jesus' reply was still more awesome, to see Jesus was to have seen the Father. Jesus is the Word of God who has taken flesh

and has his dwelling among us. He has allowed the glory of God to shine in the world through his presence among us. 'The word became flesh and lived among us and we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth (Jn 1:14). Its final manifestation will be the sign of the cross. Among the blood and sweat of human suffering, God's glory will be fully made known. In Jesus, God took on our human condition and made it the way of salvation.

## **REFLECTION 2:**

## **JESUS LEADS US**

After the death of Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life, the followers of him as risen and present began to refer to themselves as 'the Way' or as 'followers of the Way'. To-day, the challenge for us believers is to live in such a manner that others might see a way to God in the witness we offer and in all our words and works. At times, however, rather than being a clear path to God, the community of Jesus' followers has been perceived as an obstacle. Remember the scandals of the Avignon papacy, the brutal actions of some of the Crusaders, and more recently the scandals. Nevertheless, while admitting the wrongs and making every effort to repent, rehabilitate and make recompense, we are to continue to be a holy, priestly people whose source of goodness, light and life is God.

It appears from to-days' Gospel that the disciples did not really understand what Jesus was telling them (John 14: 1-12). And so, Thomas' question; 'Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?' What did Jesus mean? Well, suppose we are in a strange town and ask for directions. A complicated set of directions could leave us confused but supposing the person we ask says: 'Come I will take you there'. In that case, that person to us is 'the way' and we cannot miss it. That is what Jesus does for us. He does not only give advice and directions, he takes us by the hand and leads us. He does not tell us about the way, he is the way. Then, supposing someone proposes to teach the truth, then that person's character makes all the difference. A burglar who teaches the necessity for honesty, a domineering person who teaches the beauty of humility, are bound to be ineffective. Truth cannot be conveyed solely in words, it must be brought home by example and that is where the greatest human teacher falls down. No teacher has ever embodied the truth that he or she taught – except Jesus. While many could say, 'I have taught you the truth, only Jesus could say, 'I am the Truth'. In the final analysis, what we are always seeking for is life. Our search is not for knowledge for its own sake, but what will make life worth living. Jesus is life because from all eternity, he has divine life from the Father and he allows us through the grace of the sacraments to be sharers in that divine life. This is why the Gospel says: 'This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent'. Finally, Jesus said: 'No-one comes to the Father except through me'. Jesus alone is the way to God and in him we see what God is like. He alone can lead us into God's presence without fear.