

## Homily: 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020. 5th Sunday of Easter

Many people are becoming quite restive at being locked down, and as other nations ease their conditions, there is a longing for some easing, and a plan for the way ahead for all of us here.

This is very natural, as life is a constant process of change. We are ever leaving one day to move on to the next: life is a constant journey. We obviously see that in our children, as they develop day by day, and grow physically, mentally and spiritually, and need the stimulus of each other, of school, education, of church as they daily increase, one way or another.

Spring time too, we see much growing and blossoming, as sun and rain help bring things to fruition. We long for things to flourish.

All that applies spiritually too. The Easter season continues, and the Risen Jesus is ever with us. Lockdown gives us time to think and ponder more. Last Sunday we heard Jesus say ‘I am the gate, or the door, I am the Good Shepherd, and in Lent we heard him say ‘I am the light of the world’, and ‘I am the resurrection and the life’.

In St John’s Gospel there are seven statements when Jesus uses ‘I am’ echoing the divine name as revealed to Moses at the Burning bush. Each statement reveals some aspect of how God in Jesus relates to our life. Today he says ‘I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.’

If we are looking for direction, for a way ahead, Jesus is that Way. As life is always moving on, so we are always on the move, on the way, and that means we have a destination. The destination is life and knowledge with God the Father. We heard Jesus last week say that he came to give us life, life to the full. Life to the full, life in the Spirit, the Lord, the creator and giver of life.

St Pope John Paul II, leading us into the Third Millennium said “The whole of the Christian life is like a great pilgrimage to the house of the Father.”

St Thomas Aquinas wrote in a commentary on this gospel passage, ‘Christ himself is the way’, and good reason he had for saying so, since through him we have access to the Father. Now, because this way is not at

all a distance from its destination or terminating point but rather joined with it, he adds ‘the truth and the life’, and so he is at once the way and its destination or terminus. In his humanity, he is the way, in his divinity the terminus. So as man he says ‘I am the way’ and as God he adds ‘the truth and the life.’

Aquinas goes on ‘for the termination of this way is the realisation of our human longings. Now humanity longs for two things above all; first the knowledge of truth, and the continuance of existence.

St Augustine also says: ‘Walk in the man Jesus, and you will arrive at God. Jesus is God’s truth and the vehicle of his life.’

But we know as we journey, life can seem long and winding, leading along by-ways, and wrong turnings, through thickets, and along narrow paths, or ways so wide that we get lost, or as in a maze, and wander round and round, searching for our way out. Again Aquinas is a help; for he says “Now it is better to limp **in the way** than to make good speed **beside the way**. For he who limps in the way, even though he makes little progress, draws nearer to the destination; whereas they who walk away from the way get further from the destination the faster they run.” Stay close to Christ, looking always unto Jesus.

The gospel does not give us an abstract theory of life, nor a comprehensive code of ethical behaviour. It is the story of God’s revelation in the human life of his Son. We are given a model, Jesus, an example in the way of life that shows solitude and community, joys and pains, loyalty and desertion, serenity and anxiety, good health and the pains of dying.

Throughout all the experiences of life, the foundational motive of his life is love. The value which casts light on everything is his love of the Father’s will and his outreach of love to everyone he meets. He is the way whose teaching guides our behaviour and shows us how to live.

He is the truth in whom the searching mind will find ultimate meaning and satisfaction. He not only speaks the truth, but the fullness of truth is found in him alone. This is the answer to Pilate’s question “What is truth” and who departs the room before he can hear the answer.

The truth is not some abstract system of thought but is embodied in the particular person of Jesus. Jesus is the truth about God as he is the truth about humanity.

As St John says in the prologue to his Gospel, (John 1: 14, 17) ‘The Word was made flesh, full of grace and truth.’ ‘Grace and truth come through Jesus Christ.’ He is the life who has conquered death and offers eternal life to all who accept his way and truth.

That is why the opening words of the gospel today that many of you know I have preached on so often at funeral Masses is, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still and trust in me.”

We have heard the words so many times. In the present situation, as so often is the case, they are totally relevant. Whatever is going on, we must ultimately trust in God, and his Son Jesus.

An issue that arises for many because of the virus, is the sudden death of loved ones, of all ages, and the situation that has meant it not being possible to be with them in their last moments, or to have a ‘proper’ funeral; rather just a very short service at the graveside or similar at the crematorium. And as I say at all funerals, now the only thing we can do for them is pray for them.

The promise of the Lord is our eternal destiny to be with him, for our destination is heaven and eternal life with him.

Jesus is preparing for us, so that if we are walking his way, then we will come to the Father, for no one comes to the Father, except through Jesus. In faith we should fix our eyes on heaven, where Christ is, which is what St Paul says to us in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading on Easter Sunday, reaffirmed by St Peter in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading today, which hope can overcome all the troubles that burden us and fill us with confidence, light, joy and peace.

Make the response to the Psalm a guide through the week:  
‘May your love be upon us O Lord, as we place all our hope in you.’

And may the Lord be with you all.