

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

No one can come to the Father except through me.

If you know me, you know my Father too.

If someone had never heard those words before, but responded to them, the first remark such a person may make could well be, "I've never heard anyone speak like that before. Who said it?" Of course, we know who said it, Jesus Christ, and the response of the-would-be enquirer is correct; no one has ever spoken like this before! Who, indeed, could make such a claim? What is even more striking in Jesus' words is that the Way, the Truth and the Life, is not some sort of programme, a book, a technique or any 'thing' for that matter. The Way, the Truth and the Life is a person, one unique person alone, Jesus Christ. The Way is a person, the Truth is a person, the Life is a person. There is nothing abstract here, but a tangible person whom the first disciples saw and touched and heard. Ultimately, what we find expressed in Our Lord's words is the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God. The one who seeks truth and life must come to Jesus Christ and open the door to him. Moreover, Jesus' words are not only words but are one with his life and are confirmed and demonstrated by the events of his life. Jesus' way leads through death to Resurrection and the Kingdom of God. In the opening sentences of this Sunday's Gospel, our Lord reveals the destination of His Way.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house; I am now going to prepare a place for you.

Once again, the person who had never heard those words before might consider these extraordinary claims and actually desire to receive what has been offered. Such an open and receptive response is exactly what the Apostles experienced when, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, they first preached the Good News of the Gospel. In the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we are told that the word of the Lord continued to spread and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem was greatly increased. Such was the development of the life of the Church that the Apostles made provision for growing needs by sharing their ministry with others by instituting the ministry of Deacons, just as today many forms of ministry, lay and ordained, work together to build up the Body of Christ which is the Church.

As we might expect, not everyone accepts and believes in Jesus Christ and the Gospel he has taught us. In the Second Reading, St. Peter speaks of the Lord as *the living stone, rejected by men but chosen by God* but *this stone rejected by the builders has proved to be the keystone*.

Throughout the Scripture readings for this Sunday, the theme of 'trust in God' is very much present. Jesus, himself, commands us *trust in God still, and trust in me*. This trust is a confidence in God which is born of faith, and in particular that God can bring positive things from negative things, good from evil. The Apostles underwent many trials on account of God's word, but were undaunted, and from the seeds they planted, then watered by the Holy Spirit, countless numbers have come to know and follow Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

In these very challenging times for the whole human family, our first response must, surely, be to pray and trust in God.

Fr. Anthony