

5th Sunday Easter (A)b

- A Real Estate ad by the freeway in the outer Western suburbs – “If you lived here, you would be home by now” – you don’t have to travel any further!
- But I’ve seen it also as a billboard outside a church suggesting that you could find your home in this community of believers.
- Today’s Gospel really asks us where we find our home & refuge, & it’s appropriate on this Mother’s Day to hold in gratitude those motherly figures in our own lives who are homemakers & nurturers of our lives & relationships.
- Most of us manage through the day without being bothered by the big question of life itself: "what's the point of being here – where we are in our lives?" - It can take all our time & energy merely to cope with what the day brings, & we're generally happy to leave questions about the meaning & purpose of life to philosophers.
- But there are times when we are forced to pause because something happens that throws our daily life’s routine into question.
- Like the sudden death of someone very close to us which leaves us feeling a large absence, or when the hopes & dreams I've had, because of some disaster in our lives, have vanished, or in this time of uncertainty as to how we come through the pandemic. Questions arise which are **our** questions.
- Things that we took for granted now look different from before; ventures we thought so important, begin to look so insubstantial against the reality of loss; we wonder where we are going, if anywhere.
- What direction do we take when our very sense of direction seems to have gone? We might feel that we're going round in circles but not really getting anywhere.
- An experience of profound loss always makes us question our own direction in life, & in today's Gospel John shows us that it is no different for the disciples.
- Jesus gives his final discourse before leaving his close followers for the last time. He tells them not to be afraid, because he is going to prepare a place for them, & he will return to take them with him.
- And it’s Thomas who voices their concern: what direction are they going to take in the absence of Jesus – after he’s gone?
- What is to be their way when Jesus leaves them?
- What Jesus does not do is give his disciples a theology handbook that will answer all their questions about God; neither does he hand them a book detailing every law with an index classifying every sin.
- We might wish that he did, but clearly that was not his way.
- There are no maps into the future with specific routes clearly arrowed.
- Jesus simply points to himself: "I am the Way, the Truth & the Life."
- He alone is the gateway to God, the access to the Father.
- **Jesus is the Way** by which we travel to the fullness of God; he doesn't say, "I have a way" but "I am the Way."
- Only when we are united with him can we reach the Father, because he & the Father are one.

- We are not speaking about the unknown God of the Greeks or the invisible God of the Jews: we are speaking about the God who has made himself known in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who is the face of God, the heart of God, the word of God, the self-outpouring of God.
- God is inseparable from Jesus as the Father is inseparable from the Son - *"No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you know my Father too."*
- **Jesus is the Truth.** 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 the truth?"
- The truth is not some, abstract system of thought but is embodied in the particular person of Jesus. The truth is not a theory, it is a person.
- Jesus is the truth about God as he is the truth about humanity.
- The one who walked the roads of Palestine & ate with sinners, who healed & forgave, who died a criminal's punishment is God's gift of his true self to us.
- As God looked to Jesus to reveal his true self, we look to Jesus to reveal God; He is the only true icon of God.
- **Jesus is the Life.** As John announced at the beginning of his Gospel:
- *Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him. All that came to be had life in him.*
- We **are** because of Jesus. Our very life is God's gift through Jesus.
- This is why we regard life as sacred from its beginning to its end.
- We see it not as an accident of fate but as a unique example of God's gift.
- No one is regarded as a mistake by the Gospel - no one ever conceived is a mistake!
- Other people may see us as a large mistake, but the Gospel clothes us with a unique dignity. Jesus is the Life, & we all have our life in him.
- But does all this help to give you direction, or do you remain as puzzled as the disciples?
- The disciples learn soon after Jesus leaves them that they don't have ready answers to everything.
- As we learn from the early divisions in the community, they all have to work together to find a way forward.
- There are many things Jesus did not tell them, & they have to try to face the future with honesty. Together.
- Jesus trusts his followers down the ages to face the confusion & complexity of the world. That's why he doesn't leave answers to everything.
- There's still a lot of working out to be done.
- Looking to Jesus as the Way, the Truth & the Life, doesn't actually solve every question effortlessly. But Jesus knew that! Clearly he wants us to put our faith to work.
- If all Christians lived out this Way, Truth & Life, we would, through the imagination & inspiration of Jesus' Spirit, fulfil his extraordinary prophecy that we could do greater works than he did – that is the challenge for us.