

Sunday Homily

5th SUNDAY OF EASTER

10 MAY 2020

YEAR A

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK I

“Lord, we do not know where you are going,
so how can we know the way?”

Illustration

Have you ever been lost? It can be an alarming experience. In these days of satellite navigation systems, there are many technological aids to help us find our way to where we want to go. But sometimes a bit of human support and help, and maybe the experience of someone who personally knows the route, is what we'd rather have.

It doesn't always work like that. A story tells of a couple of tourists who were spending an idyllic few days on holiday in the country. They enjoyed walking the rural roads and byways. But one day they wandered so far that they had no idea how to find their way back to the hotel where they were staying. The daylight hours were nearing their end, and they were relieved suddenly to spot an old man sitting in the doorway of his cottage enjoying the evening sun. Explaining their predicament, and where they needed to get back to, they asked for directions. The old man thought for a few moments, shook his head slowly, and said, “Ah, I know the place you mean. The trouble is, if you want to get there, you wouldn't want to be starting from here.”

Gospel Teaching

“You wouldn't want to be starting from here.” In a way, that's what the disciples seem to be thinking in today's Gospel. Jesus has just told them that he is going away. Despite all his assurances, and his words of comfort to them, they are worried. When they'd committed themselves to Jesus, they'd imagined that he would remain with them in person, guiding their footsteps, helping them to make their way through life with him. But now here he is talking about leaving them, going on ahead of them. How will they ever manage to follow? Thomas sums up what they are all silently thinking: “Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” This is most definitely not where they want to be starting from.

In response to the question, Jesus doesn't draw them a map. He doesn't give them a set of directions. “I am the Way,” he says. And not only “the Way”, but also “the Truth and the Life”. It must have been hard for the disciples to comprehend

those words at first, to understand the full depth of their meaning. Yet it would not be long before those same disciples were known as “followers of the Way”.

The months and years they had spent with Jesus had been for a purpose. As they’d spent time with him, hearing his words, watching the things he did, sharing the life he lived, they had changed. Sometimes they’d been slow to understand. Sometimes they’d got things wrong, and they still would. But they’d learned, not only from Jesus’ teaching but also from his example. They’d seen the way he related to people. They’d seen the way that he put the loving will of God his Father first. They’d seen the way he lived his life. And slowly but surely, though not always smoothly, they’d begun to know that way, and even to live it out themselves. They’d come to see it as the way of truth; they’d come to know it as the way to life. And so they became followers of the Way.

Application

How can we do the same? We too are called to follow Jesus’ example; but we’re not expected to do so alone. When Jesus told his disciples that he would no longer be physically present with them, he also gave them a promise. When he returned to his Father, he would send them the Spirit of truth, who would remain with them always. It’s through that Spirit that they would, incredible though it may have seemed to them at the time, be able to perform even greater works than those they had seen Jesus perform himself. We see this happening in the amazing growth of the Church which we read about in the Acts of the Apostles through this Easter season.

That promise holds true for us today. We are the followers of the Way. We are not lost on the road; we are not abandoned to make our own way. We are, in Peter’s words, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation”. As we follow the Way, we can know that we have the promised Spirit with us, to guide us and to show us the way to our true and eternal home.