Lectio Divina – 5th Sunday of Easter Year A

Contexts

John’s Gospel – in brief

* **Structure of John’s Gospel**

**1:1-18:** **Prologue** – An introduction to and summary of the career of the incarnate Word.

**1:19-12:50: Part One: The Book of Signs**: the Word reveals himself to the world and to his own, but they do not accept him.

**Chapter 6** – Jesus, the Bread of Life is right in the middle of The Book of Signs – a central text in more ways than one!

**13:1-20:31: Part Two: The Book of Glory**: To those who accept him, the Word shows his glory by returning to the Father in death, resurrection and ascension. Fully glorified, he communicates the Spirit of life.

**21:1-25: Epilogue**: Galilean resurrection appearances and second conclusion.

* It is the only Gospel to call Jesus “God”.
* Purpose of Gospel is so that those who follow Jesus might have the kind of faith that would give them eternal life, namely, the faith that Jesus was God’s only Son, possessing God’s own life and had come into the world from above that people might be given that life (and thus be begotten by God) and become God’s children. (Raymond Brown SS)
* Jesus is ‘The Bread of Life’ who feeds, nourishes and sustains the children of God.
* Remember that John’s Gospel brings together a number of Jesus traditions from a number of early Johannine communities.

John 14:1-12 – things to notice

* Typical of John’s Gospel, today’s text follows the pattern of a statement from Jesus, questions and misunderstandings from the disciples and further explanation by Jesus.
* The Gospel begins with Jesus’ statement about his leaving the disciples and his return. It is a reassuring statement when we realise that Jesus has just been speaking about leaving the disciples (v 33-37)
* Jesus calls the disciples to have calm hearts and to have faith (trust) both in God and in him. He says there are many dwelling places (rooms) in his Father’s house; he is going to prepare a place for them and then will return to take with him, so that they may dwell in communion with Jesus. They already know the way to the place where Jesus is going.
* Thomas: We don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?
* Jesus makes it obvious: ‘I am the way’ – the words ‘truth’ and ‘life’ qualify the way: Jesus is not just a guide to salvation (the way) he is the source of life and truth. Remember last week’s Gospel: I have come that they may have life and have it in all its fullness.
* ‘No one can come to the Father except through me’ – last week: I am the ‘gate’, so that ‘if you know me, you know the Father’. One of the great themes of John’s Gospel: there is no access to God except through Jesus.
* ‘From this moment you know him and have seen him’ – another great theme: the indwelling of God in Jesus, or the communion which exists between Father and Son.
* Philip: ‘Let us see the Father, then we shall be satisfied’. Philip is asking for a vision of the Father.
* Jesus unfolds the teaching about indwelling/communion between Father and himself. To have seen Jesus is to have seen the Father; Jesus speaks the word of the Father both in words and in concrete actions (works) which testify to the truth of what he is saying.
* The one who believes in me will be/do the same – speak and act out of the heart of God.
* That will be the believers’ mission when Jesus returns to the Father.

The Liturgical Context – why does the church choose this passage to reflect on this Sunday?

The readings of the Easter Season continue to unfold for us the great Easter Mystery - the enduring presence of Jesus among us and what ‘new life in Christ’ might mean.

The Gospel of each Sunday is always from John except for 3rd Sunday and the feast of the Ascension.

Year A Gospels

The Gospel of each Sunday is always from John except for the 3rd Sunday and the feast of the Ascension.

Easter Sunday: Christ, risen from the dead

2nd Sunday: Jesus appears to the disciples & to Thomas

3rd Sunday: Jesus and the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke)

4th Sunday: Jesus, the Sheep-gate

5th Sunday: Christ, the way, truth & life

6th Sunday: Promise of the Spirit

Ascension: Jesus commission the eleven (Matthew)

Pentecost: Receive the Holy Spirit.

To understand why the Church chooses a particular Gospel, you need to look at the first reading, and during the Seasons (Lent, Advent, Easter & Christmas) at the second reading as well.

The first reading shows the early Christian community dealing with a concrete problem in an innovative way – the appointment of deacons to handle the distribution of food so that the whole community can be fed and the Gospel can continue to be preached.

Second reading from 1 Peter speaks of Jesus as the ‘living stone’. Being close to Jesus makes the believer also into a ‘living stone’ which together makes the ‘spiritual house’. This house is not made of bricks and mortar, but real, living human beings who form a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of the God who has called them out of darkness and into his own wonderful light.

Both readings show what can happen among those who believe in Jesus after he has returned to the Father. Faith in Jesus does not exempt us from dealing with difficult realities, but we solve them by drawing on the living presence of God among us (the Holy Spirit) – an act of faith (trust). Within the context of a living faith (relationship with God) the believer recognises Jesus as the Way, Truth and Life of his/her own search for the face of the living God.

Jesus is the way into the Father’s heart, the truth of the Father’s communion with us and, therefore, the very life of God present among us.

In the opening words of the Gospel Jesus calls the disciples to trust him and to trust God. He does so in the context of announcing his departure to them. Understandably, the disciples are afraid and uncertain, which the questions of Thomas and Philip show.

Jesus calls them to trust him as the way to the God, the living truth about the God and the very life of God.

In a sense, Jesus is our map, our road and the destination of our journey. But arriving at the destination is not something which only happens in heaven. We are meant to start arriving now through the gift of the Spirit.

It is the spirit of Jesus who holds us in communion with God, who reveals to us the truth about God and who is the very life of God within each of us. Jesus is the reign of God in person and that is what we are called to be, too.

We want to live true to the vocation God has given us, aware of the Spirit which has been placed into our hearts, allowing that Spirit to change us into true believers so that the face of God might be seen within our own.