



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, CYCLE A

Fr. David Rosenberg

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"I am the way, and the truth, and the life." John 14:6

When Jesus speaks of leaving the world and returning to the Father in heaven, our reaction can be a negative one. It is human nature to want to say physically as well as spiritually connected. But Jesus goes on to say that it is necessary for him to depart so that even greater works can be accomplished. This is the point where we would do well to ponder that Jesus is one-in-three Persons in one God. Soon, he will send the Holy Spirit, and in the power of that Spirit, Christ's work will pervade the entire world, not just those he might be physically surrounded by. Jesus is preparing us for what is to come.

As Thomas and Philip converse with Jesus, we experience a warm human exchange, as between close friends. The lesson for us is that we, as the Body of Christ, are called to be gentle, never rebuking, and no hint of disappointment heard. This Gospel is not only showing the kindness and mercy of Jesus, but it is also an explicit catechetical lesson on the Trinity: *"I am in the Father and the Father is in me. ...believe me because of the works themselves [through the action of the Holy Spirit]"*.

As with visits from family and friends that come to an end, there is sadness in this encounter. Just as our departing close friends give words of encouragement, so Jesus gives words that will enable the apostles to live their mission after he has gone. Yes, the sadness of his departure is heartfelt, but joy and consolation remain.

In lesson 2 of my book, *"Mass Matters: We Are Called to Glory"* (ISBN 9798353954941) I state this special relationship between Jesus, the Trinity and the baptized this way:

Jesus purposefully designed His whole message to be spoken through the apostles and their faithfulness to what they receive from him. After only a brief period in the 40 days leading up to His Ascension the risen Lord lets himself be seen, then He ascends to the heavens, after which everything depends on the apostles who witnessed His Resurrection. Recall the words Jesus spoke to Mary in John 20:17 *"Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"* Those who believe, although they have never seen Christ, believe not because they have seen the risen Lord, but because they believe what the apostles witnessed. On the day of Pentecost the power of the Holy Spirit rushed upon these potentially disappointing figures and made them instead powerful witnesses.

Generation after generation for two thousand years we now receive this Good News from our encounter with them. We believe what the apostles believed. We encounter the risen Lord through them, and pass on as the witness in every generation to follow. In making everything depend on the apostles, our risen Lord teaches us His intention to be one body with His Church. He is teaching us that He lives and acts only through her. He appears in His one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church for all to encounter.

You are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises" of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

Jesus said to his disciples:

*"Do not let your hearts be troubled.
You have faith in God; have faith also in me.
In my Father's house there are many dwelling places.
If there were not,
would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?
And if I go and prepare a place for you,
I will come back again and take you to myself,
so that where I am you also may be.
Where I am going you know the way."*

Thomas said to him,

"Master, we do not know where you are going;
how can we know the way?"

Jesus said to him,
*"I am the way and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me.
If you know me, then you will also know my Father.
From now on you do know him and have seen him."*

Philip said to him,

"Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us."

Jesus said to him,

*"Have I been with you for so long a time
and you still do not know me, Philip?
Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.
How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?
Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?
The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own.
The Father who dwells in me is doing his works.
Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me,
or else, believe because of the works themselves.
Amen, amen, I say to you,
whoever believes in me will do the works that I do,
and will do greater ones than these,
because I am going to the Father."*

The Gospel of the Lord

