

Our Lady of the Airways Parish

Fifth Sunday of Easter, 2020



Dear Friends in Christ,

“Let your love be upon us, O Lord, even as we hope in you” (Ps 33:22).

In a past reflection, I wrote that “During this Pandemic period, we are bombarded every day with so much doom and gloom: non-stop reports of Covid-19 related deaths, job losses in the millions, financial hardships and uncertainties, etc.” Today, the global situation has slightly improved, as many places have been able to ‘flatten the curve’ with the help of countless people practising physical distancing. We slowly move along with ‘cautious optimism’ as certain restrictions start to ease. The simple reality, however, is that we continue to be overshadowed by the unknown. At this time, there are still more questions than answers; fear than confidence; doubts than certainties. Even our confidence and trust in God can be shaken.

Our Gospel reading today contains the teachings of Jesus taken from his discourse at the Last Supper. During that final evening with His apostles, Our Lord knew that their lives were going to be thrown into disarray; in short order, their world was going to collapse into chaos. In the face of his impending suffering, passion and death on Calvary, Jesus offers them words of encouragement. He says to them, *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.”* Jesus was reminding his apostles that at such times, there was only one thing they can do: to remain steadfast in their trust in God and in Him.

Jesus’ words are both providential and appropriate for us today. During these unprecedented and difficult times, we are reminded to remain steadfast in our faith in God and in the Lord. While it is often very difficult to discern Christ’s Presence within our lives, nevertheless, He continues to remain at work behind the scenes. Jesus takes us by the hand and leads us; He strengthens and guides us personally each day. To see this reality, however, requires more than the use of our bodily eyes. It requires that we see it through the eyes of faith. By trusting more in Him and less in our abilities, Our Lord can help make the unbearable become bearable, and give us a glimmer of light in the midst of the unknown.

Our Lord goes on to say, *“In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places.... And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.”* These words are traditionally associated with the idea of heaven. The Greek word used, *menó*, literally means, ‘dwelling place,’ ‘a place where you stay,’ ‘a place to remain.’ Jesus’ words, however, have another meaning; it conveys Jesus’ desire to remain in us and us with Him.

Our Lord is usually with us by means of His Church and through the sacraments. To remain with Jesus these days can seem rather difficult, especially with our churches closed and the limited accessibility of the sacraments. Yet, we should see these temporary challenges in a positive light: as opportunities for us to come out of our spiritual comfort zone, and to find new and creative ways in meeting Christ. The saints, under the impulse of God’s grace, often had to let go of their vain attempt in controlling their path to God. Instead, they trusted and believed in the Lord, knowing that His plans and His will, were always better than their own. If we are willing to venture beyond our customary spiritual practices of encountering the Lord, He will undoubtedly surprise us, and we will see our lives gradually take on a proportion far greater than we ever imagined.

As we continue with the Gospel text, Jesus takes three essential concepts of the Jewish faith and applies them to Himself: *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* Let us reflect upon these concepts.

“I am the way....” The Greek word used in the gospel is, *hodos*, which literally means ‘a path’ or ‘a right road.’ Jewish thought traditionally interpreted ‘the way’ to mean either the manner by which a person must walk: *“You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God has commanded you”* (Dt. 5:32), or with the ways of God: *“Teach me your way, O Lord”* (Ps 27:11). In professing to be *the way*, Jesus identified Himself as the surest and safest path to God. Jesus leads us to a life with the Trinity - with the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit - since He alone comes from God. The Catechism captures this essence with the words: *“Left to its own natural powers, humanity does not have access to the ‘Father’s house’, to God’s life and happiness. Only Christ can open to man such access that we, his members, might have confidence that we too shall go where he, our Head and our Source, has preceded us”* (661). Thus, Jesus is the only way to our eternal happiness.

“I am the truth....” Jewish people often related truth with divine order. While many speak about various dimensions of truth, Jesus alone authoritatively and flawlessly teaches us the truths about God: all loving, merciful and forgiving Father. When Jesus stood before Pilate, *“He professes that he himself is The Truth and the witness to the truth. He does not defend the truth with legions but rather makes it visible through his Passion”* (Benedict XVI). Jesus embodies truth and bears testimony to God’s love for humanity, by manifesting it concretely through his life and death.

“I am the life....” In Jewish tradition, God is considered the creator of all being and the ultimate source of all life. The Greek word used to refer to natural life is *bios*. However, in the gospel, John uses the Greek word, *z  *, which refers to ‘supernatural life,’ ‘eternal life,’ or ‘spiritual life.’ Jesus possesses eternal life because He is divine, the Son of God. He also sanctifies us through His life-giving Spirit. Our entrance into the glorious supernatural life of the Trinity is only made possible because Life Himself entered into humanity and showed us the way. We cannot earn eternity by our own natural powers, that is, by doing good deeds; rather, the path to eternal life can only be obtained through and by the Son in the Spirit who leads us to Father.

Only time will determine what will be the ‘new normal.’ What should stay constant within our lives, however, is to remember Christ’s words: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled.”* Let us continue to seek the face of Christ, *“Who is the same yesterday and today and forever,”* so that Christ remains in us and we in Him!

Yours in Christ,



Fr. Thomas Lim