



# THE WAY, THE TRUTH, THE LIFE

(JOHN 14:1-12)

Matthew is writing for a community of mainly Jewish Christians: he therefore presents Jesus and his teachings clearly against the background of their Jewish tradition.

In today's Gospel reading, we hear Jesus preparing his disciples for his leaving them to return to the Father. This will enable them to enter into permanent communion with God. However, two of the disciples, Thomas and Philip, misunderstand his teaching, and this allows the evangelist to make it clearer. The only way to the Father is through Jesus. Jesus and the Father are so closely identified that to have seen Jesus is to have experienced the Father: the signs that Jesus worked have revealed the Father's glory to those who have been open to understanding them.

Jesus answers Thomas' objection about not knowing Jesus' destination – or perhaps destiny – so how can they know the way: he tells him that he is the Way; this is because he is the Truth and the Life – he is himself the ultimate word, the saving revelation of God through whom believers will come to the Father and be one with God. ■

## REFLECT

**W**e are nearing the end of the Easter season, and our Gospel reading today sounds a warning bell that Jesus' departure is not far off. In the Gospel of John, his being lifted up will take place on the cross, but in our liturgical calendar, we mark this by the feast of the Ascension. In this section, Jesus is concerned about strengthening the faith of his disciples.

We might consider today the person of Philip. We came across him earlier in John's account of the story of Jesus at the feeding of the five thousand, and the meaning of that sign is that Jesus can satisfy the deepest needs and longings of the human spirit. Philip remarked then that two hundred denarii's worth of bread would not satisfy the needs of the crowd. When he says to Jesus, "let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied", he is not saying that their curiosity or scepticism will be answered, but is asking that their deepest needs as human beings be fulfilled.

The Gospel of John is at the same time inspiring and challenging. When we read the Synoptic Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke, we can come to the conclusion that being a disciple of Jesus is a matter of putting his teachings into practice. The Fourth Gospel is, in a sense, much more demanding. The various characters we come across, such as in today's extract, Thomas and Philip, are rather types of person than historical individuals: they represent different kinds of people and varying points of view. There is one individual who remains, significantly, anonymous and who stands for every disciple: that one is identified as the disciple Jesus loved; we might note that he is not called the disciple who loved Jesus. That person stands for each one of us, and in our reading today, Jesus tells us that he is preparing a place for us, where we will be in complete communion with him. What is required of us is faith, trust and commitment: in other words, love. ■

## LEARN

The Gospel of John presents a completely different picture of Jesus and his ministry from that of the accounts of Mark, Matthew and Luke.

The mother of Jesus and the "Beloved Disciple" are never identified as Mary and John.

They are presented at the cross as representative figures, the mother standing for the community, the unnamed disciple for the individual follower of Jesus.

## DO

As you walk along the street, think about Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life.



## SAY

**The word of the Lord is faithful, and all his works to be trusted**

(Psalm 33:4)