

During these last weeks of the Easter season leading up to Pentecost

Our readings have a specific dynamic

They are from Jesus' last discourse with his Apostles

As he prepared them for his death and resurrection

And ultimately for his exultation

His ascension into heaven

That is what he continues to prepare our hearts for as well

To lead us to become the disciples he desires for us

Even more than anything we might ever desire for ourselves

He speaks of his death as *going to the Father*

And that is really what this life is

A series of small deaths we continually suffer

And he walks through these with us

To bring us home

I am the way, the truth and the life

He gives us his teaching

But more than simple instruction

He became one of us

To walk with us

To lead us

The disciples were experiencing this

There was a serious division within this young community

They were growing daily

Greeks and Gentiles mixing with Jews

The Hellenists were Greeks

And the Hebrews were Jewish

The Hellenists complained that their widows were being discriminated against

They bring their complaint to the 12

They instruct them to select seven men

The 12 pray over them and commission them to service

So the 12 can remain devoted to the ministry of the Word and prayer

This threat to the unity of the early followers is healed

And the number of disciples increases greatly

In our Gospel Jesus is dealing with a different type of threat

He has been telling his disciples of his upcoming persecution

His time has almost arrived

And they were afraid

Troubled at the thought of his being taken from them

He tries to comfort them with his words

Do not let your hearts be troubled

You have faith in God

Have faith also in me

Jesus knows what is coming down the road

Betrayal, desertion, denial

Persecution and death

And he does not want these things to rob them of their peace

These things are coming

But God has a plan

And they are all part of that plan

Even though you do not understand now

Remember these words

So when they happen you can be at peace

And he promises them he is going to the Father

Where he will prepare a place for them

And he will return and bring them home

Thomas asks how they can join him?

How do we know the way?

Jesus tells him it not a physical journey

It is a relationship

I am the way, the truth and the life

If you know me, you will know the Father

They are still confused

So Phillip asks to let them see the Father

And Jesus reassures them that they have seen him

I am in the Father and the Father is in me

Believe me

Or believe because of the works

Jesus performed his miracles so they would believe

These miracles are recorded so we will believe

These words are reassuring for us

Because if the disciples who lived with Christ

Who could ask him direct questions

Who witnessed his miracles

If these men didn't grasp what he was saying

And it is these men that are the foundations of his Church

We can see the power of the Spirit at work in them

And this same Spirit is at work in our lives today

This is what St Peter is referring to in the second reading

He tells us Jesus is a living stone

The cornerstone

But we too are living stones, the People of God

Christ's Church was not built and finished in his time on earth

It continues to be built today

But to be living stones

To be those that will do greater works

We need to be united with him

It is through the sacraments that we become one with Christ

Who is one with the Father

The saving work of Christ continues

We live in a broken world

Wars and violence in our world and in our cities

Our Church is pulled in opposite directions

Families are broken

Division all around us

Every family is affected by cancer, tragic accidents or suffering

But we see that these things have always been there

The early Church lived through similar things

Christ himself was affected by these things

And he came to show us the way

He did not write a self-help book

He did not develop a program for us to follow

He loved us

And in that love, he became man

He is the way

Not just a way, but the way

A relationship between God and man

A two-way street

Holding nothing back he offered everything for us

He continues to pour himself out for our salvation

We are adopted in him as brothers and sisters

His Father is our Father

Jesus is the Truth

Not a part of the truth

But God's definitive Word that became flesh

He is the Truth that we are to conform our lives around

And he is the Life

The life that goes beyond this world

We receive this life in our baptism

It is deepened in Confirmation

With each and every sacrament it is fed and strengthened

This life is so strong it overpowers our greatest fear

Death itself

He gives new meaning to suffering, pain, rejection, disability

These are not to be avoided at all costs

But in him they become paths to holiness

How we become the living stones in God's building

We see this in the Acts of the Apostles

How the Holy Spirit works through human failures

To build God's Church in the world

And He will do the same in our lives

Uniting our human failures

Death, illness, a business or school failure

Retirement or declining physical abilities

Whatever fashion they may occur

Uniting them to what appears to be Jesus' human failure

His cross and death

When we experience these things

Do not let your hearts be troubled

Remain steadfast and faithful

He who is the Way, the Truth and the Life

Will come and bring us home