

# Fifth Sunday of Easter

14.05.2017  
By Pádraig Ó Tuama

## Introduction

Belonging and homecoming are themes that we note in this week's text. John's gospel can be divided into two broad sections: the details of Jesus' ministry (often called The Book of Signs) and the long discourse that formed part of the final evening between Jesus and his disciples (often called The Book of Glory). This week's text comes from the earlier part of the Book of Glory, where Jesus' words of consolation, instruction, insight and analysis are compiled.

---

## Text

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 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. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, 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, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? 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 say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

---

## Comment

In the face of impending anxiety, the gospel writer has Jesus speaking words of belonging, belief and instruction to the disciples. As they worry about the future, he focuses them on the present: particularly focusing them on his own self. “I am the way” he says, and “If you know me, you will know my Father also.” These words may suffer from having been overly repeated. When we understand that Jesus was

surrounded by his friends who were guessing that he may be executed, we understand the psychological containment that Jesus was offering the disciples by saying to them that no matter what happened, to consider his life, his way of being, his work and words as the things to hold on to.

So, in the face of great anxiety, the most straightforward instructions are being given: do as I have done, find consolation in the belief that love is larger than this looming violence. He is also focusing them on how their love amongst each other can be the thing that holds them together in the wake of his life. So often when something awful happens to a community the community can find themselves further fractured in the wake of this event — accusations fly, divisions emerge and the very gathering narratives of their belonging become impoverished by rivalries, blame and suspicions.

It is too easy to forget that this evening gathering of Jesus and his friends is set against a backdrop of impending doom. The authorities have, in light of Jesus' words at the grave of Lazarus, decided to destroy him. And this meal of hospitality is occurring while hostilities are rising. All the more surprising then that the meal began with Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet, and now his words about preparing a dwelling place; the presence of the Father; the practice of love; and the gathering power of community all demonstrate the extraordinary character in the face of anxiety.

---

## Response

As we read these words of Jesus, we note that in the face of impending pain, Jesus turns to what is most important to him: meals, friends, service, words about love, instructions to be steadfast.

If your faith community meets in groups, it may be worthwhile reflecting on how individuals and groups in your community act when facing impending hostilities. So often the hostilities bring out the deepest anxiety or angst in us rather than the practices and values shown by Jesus here.

In discussing with each other the ways in which hostilities foster hostilities in us, it may be possible to reflect on the deeper hospitalities that can be practiced, no matter the strength, threat or imposition of anxiety. What are the simple things — the practices of welcome, of meals, of thanksgiving, of service, of love — that can sustain us through trials?

---

## Prayer

Jesus of the steady heart  
even when you knew  
that pain was coming  
you kept your practice:  
bringing friends for food and words  
speaking wisdom and sharing  
things that are timeless.  
May we who face many anxieties  
find the things that keep us steady  
because in times of pain  
we need to be steady  
like you.  
Amen.

---

Season: Ordinary time

Themes: Paradox