

Several weeks ago, on the Second Sunday of Lent, we heard the gospel of the Transfiguration. Jesus took three disciples with him to a high mountain and was transfigured in their sight. The immediate reaction of Peter was to want to build three tents, one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. He wanted to stay there in that moment. But before long, life went back to normal, and they were walking down the mountain. On Easter Sunday we heard the gospel of Mary Magdalen who, after she had run to the tomb and found the body of Jesus missing, was deeply troubled. As she wandered in the garden, she saw a man she took to be the gardener. When Jesus called her by name, she recognised that it was he and that he had risen. She grabbed hold of him, but he told her not to cling to him, because he had to go away and be with his Father. Instead of clinging to him, she must go and tell the disciples that she had seen him, and that he is risen.

Both these incidents tell us something important about the Christian life, and particularly what it means to be an Easter people. The disciples who went up the mountain with Jesus, and Mary Magdalen who met him on Easter morning, were told not to settle down, as they might if they had reached a destination. They had to keep on the move. Jesus says the same thing today in the gospel when he speaks to the disciples who have troubled hearts. They are troubled because Jesus himself is on the move, and Thomas doesn't know where Jesus is going. Jesus says to Thomas, "I am the Way". He is going to the Father's house to prepare a place for all those who follow him.

The image of the Father's house is a very rich image. It suggests that Jesus is talking about a family relationship. So the image conveys a sense of belonging, a sense of being at home. But it also evokes the idea of a place where life is lived joyfully and in the company of others in the family. In other gospel passages Jesus speaks of a sumptuous banquet taking place in the house of the Father. He also spoke of going out to the highways and byways to bring in guests to the banquet because there are many places at the table. In today's gospel he uses the image of a house with many rooms in it, so that everyone will find a welcome, a place to belong.

Thomas and Philip are still confused, so Jesus tells them more. If he is the Way, he is also the Life. He is telling them that the destination they are heading towards is the new life that he gives at Easter. This is eternal life; it is life to the full. He explains what that life looks like by

telling them that it can be seen in his own relationship with his Father. This is the promise he makes to Thomas and Philip: they will share in the life of the risen Jesus with his Father. This is also a promise to us: that as an Easter people we share in the divine life.

While we usually think of this in terms of a future life in heaven after we die, Jesus also wants us to recognise that we already have a share in this life. He is the Way and the Life. So, as we walk with him on the journey of our life, we are already participating in his life. This is why he tells them to do the works that he does. In fact, he tells them that they will do even greater works. These words may possibly shock us. We might wonder how we can do even greater works than Jesus did. The answer is that we do them through the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we grasp this, then I think we grasp the meaning of Easter. Easter is a participation, even now, in the life of the risen Jesus, and in his life with his Father. Because we are an Easter people, we let the eternal life, which we already share in, shape the way we do things and the decisions we make. That is what we saw happening in the first reading where we had a glimpse of the early church making decisions about the life of their community. There were two things going on. One was that some people, who couldn't look after themselves, were missing out on food. So, they made sure that there were people to reach out to them. The other was that some people were so busy that they were neglecting the word of God. So, they made sure that the varieties of service in the community allowed people time and space to study the word of God.

What we see in that picture of the early church is what it looks like to follow Jesus as our Way, and what it means to embrace the Life that he gives. Our reading today calls us to recognise that we are like that early Christian community, and in the very concrete circumstances of our personal lives and in the life of the community, we must make room for the Word of God and the needs of others. In doing this, we will be following the risen Jesus who is our Way and we will live even now the Life that is promised to us in the house of the Father.