

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

St. John 14:1-12

We live in a society of many religions and of varying faiths and of no faith. But the world has always been a place of a multitude of creeds. The problem we face with this is that there can be confusion as to where the truth lies. The tragedy is that there can be the idea that there are many truths, or no such thing as truth at all.

In this Gospel from St. John, Jesus Christ proclaims himself to be “the truth”. He says, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life”. In no uncertain terms does Our Lord here claim that He is God. Today, however, the idea of Jesus is dismissed and he is regarded more as a “nice guy” who makes a “good role model” for us to follow and who welcomed everyone just as they are. The popular idea is that we should not get hung up on the teachings of Christ, which are often inconvenient to modern sensibilities. The fact is—and anyone who has read the Gospels knows this—that Jesus did not claim to be a “nice guy,” He claimed to be God. He did not present himself as a “role model”, He presented Himself as “the Way, the Truth and the Life.” And while He did call all to himself, he demanded *metanoia*, meaning repentance (*Mk.* 1:15).

The danger that we face today is that many people claim that whatever religion we may be, we all worship the same God. That is not true. It is true that there is only one God, but it is not true that we all worship that one God truthfully. Catholics believe that God is three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and so Jesus Christ is God and the Holy Spirit is God.

There are, however, other Christians who are not Trinitarian but Unitarian who claim that Jesus Christ is a prophet but not God, and that the Holy Spirit is not a person but simply a description of God.

Judaism believes in one God but certainly not that Jesus is God. Similarly, Islam believes that there is one God but they reject the idea of Jesus as being God. They say He is a prophet, but He is not God.

While, as Catholics, we respect the beliefs of others, especially other monotheistic religions like Judaism and Islam, and we defend the idea of freedom of religion, it does not mean that we believe the same thing.

God's divine revelation of himself to man is fully realised in the person of Jesus Christ. It is he who throughout scripture and sacred tradition reveals himself as God. In scripture, in the Gospel of St. John, Our Lord says that "whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (*Jn.* 14:9) and "the Father and I are one." (*Jn.* 10:30). And in sacred tradition, beginning with the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, teaches that Jesus Christ is "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father", as we profess ourselves in the Nicene Creed at Mass.

The difficulties faithful Catholics face today is the diabolical attacks on the faith. If we claim that Jesus Christ is God and that salvation lies within Him alone—as Our Lord himself stated when he said, "No one can come to the Father except through me" (*Jn.* 14:6)—we are accused of hate speech, of being narrow minded, of not being inclusive. Today the only heresies that seems to remain is not a heresy denying the truth of the faith, but the heresy of denying certain political ideologies.

However, Catholicism is inclusive because Catholicism is the faith given by Jesus Christ Himself and handed down in an unbroken line of succession from the Apostles. It is a faith that is open to all men and women, freely and wholeheartedly. But it is a faith that demands the same thing Our Lord did when men and women went to him—repentance. If Our Lord calls us as we are, it is because he wants us to present ourselves to Him in all honesty and in all humility so that, by His grace, we may be redeemed. He may call us as we are but he does not tell us to remain as we are.

In last week's Gospel, also from St. John, Our Lord says, "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full" (*Jn. 10:10*). The fullness of life lies in Jesus Christ himself who is "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (*Jn. 14:6*).

We must stand firm in our faith, the faith of and in Jesus Christ, for there is no other way. And when we are cajoled or bullied or shamed into making Our Lord less than He truly is and our faith nothing more than a political manifesto, we should remember when Our Lord said to the Apostles, "Do you also wish to go away?" (*Jn. 6:67*), the answer of St. Peter, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life" (*Jn. 6:68*).