

A Homily for the 5th Sunday of Easter from Fr Allan

I think the most distressing part of our current reality is not being with our loved ones in their last moments. It is sad not to be able to say our last farewells for now, as we would wish. Not to be able to hug or kiss is very distressing. Our love and empathy go out to all those affected in this way. This reality is very close to us here in South Wales.

Saying goodbye (even temporarily) is hard. This weekend, as we mark the 75th Anniversary of the ending of WW2 in Europe we are reminded of the many farewells that were made during the course of the war. I see many accounts of servicemen and women returning home from present-day combats. They are usually greeted by children or relations who don't realise they are coming home. The excitement, the jubilation and exuberance when they see their loved ones is, I suppose, a measure of the loss and emptiness they felt at their leaving.

Whether we have lost relations and friends because of the current virus or because of war we will know how the disciples felt after Jesus' death. We will probably know the same confusion and anxiety as they did.

Jesus is making one of his appearances after the crucifixion. According to St John's Gospel Jesus made either 4 or 5 appearances. In today's gospel reading Jesus talks about leaving and he also promises to return. Perhaps at first sight his words don't sound very comforting or encouraging. Perhaps the disciples are too upset to even hear his words. This would be a usual symptom of grief. All they can hear is Jesus telling them that he is going away and they don't hear the rest. They are lost. Jesus must be aware of their feelings. Remember that when he appeared to those gathered in the upper room his first words to them were "Peace be with you". Now he explicitly tells them NOT to let their hearts be troubled. He wants to reassure them that all will be well. However, they are only human and Thomas and Philip will need some more comforting. They still have questions to be answered. "Lord we don't know where you are going so how can we know the way?" Philip says, "Lord let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied". Of course they are confused. The difference between the Jesus of the Last Supper and the Jesus after the resurrection is vast - it is a giant step! The disciples haven't taken this step yet. For now, they can't understand that Jesus departure is not permanent. He is not abandoning them. Just as he is not abandoning those who grieve and suffer now. They haven't understood what "rising from the dead" could mean.

We have the benefit of hindsight and we have taken the leap. We didn't know the Jesus who travelled through Samaria, Galilee, Jericho but we are Easter People. We are people of faith without having seen the historic Jesus. We have received the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit enables us to know the Father through the Son, and enables us to do the works of Jesus. When we can believe this our worries have the potential to disappear. We know Jesus AND the Father and we can have a deep relationship with God AND with one another.

As we move towards Pentecost we will be challenged to put into practice the works of Jesus. In these days we have many opportunities to do this. In whatever situation we find ourselves we can ask, "How can I, as mother, father, relation, friend, welcomer, reader, Eucharistic Minister, collector, altar server, musician, catechist, cleaner, priest etc let my relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, show itself to all of God's people?"