***PARACLESIS: JESUS IS THE WAY MM online***

**On Sunday, John taught us about evangelism and how difficult it is to be an evangelist. Well, I’ve been an evangelist for thirty years come November and I guess I was actually an evangelist from when I was converted, and I agree – it’s not easy! But, then, nothing worthwhile is. Here’s a word to help us: *paraclesis. Parawhatis?* I’ll come back to it in a minute, but, first, let’s go to John 14 where many of the people *you* want to help are. You may be there yourself, actually.**

**Jn. 14:1-6**

**Thomas was getting a bit confused. He didn’t know where Jesus was going. It didn’t help when Jesus said, *You know the way to the place I am going,* so he blurted out, *Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?***

**I admire Doubting Thomas for his honesty, don’t you? Do you remember how he was the one who wouldn’t take the others’ word for it after the resurrection but, instead, insisted on a personal encounter with Jesus before he would believe that He was alive (20:25)? And how Jesus honoured his honesty by granting him that encounter and inviting him to touch His wounds? *Stop doubting and believe,* He said (20:27).**

**And, here, in today’s reading, He said to him and to you and to all those who are full of scepticism, doubt and confusion, *I am the way….*What could He mean?**

**Well, let’s go for a walk with some more disciples who were lost on the way to Emmaus:**

**Lk. 24:13-29**

**Did you notice how Jesus *came up and walked along with them (v. 15)*? Did you notice how, when *they* stopped, *He stopped (vv. 17bff)*? Did you notice how He gently questioned them to find out what they did and didn’t know, what they did and didn’t understand (vv. 17, 19, 26)? Did you notice how He didn’t overwhelm them with good advice but, instead, taught them truth from the Bible (v. 27)? (Later they testified that His Bible study hadn’t been boring – in fact they said that their hearts had *burned* within them with excitement (v. 32)). And did you notice that He didn’t force Himself on them, indeed, He was willing to move on without them, but He waited for *them* to invite Him in (vv. 28-9)?**

**And what was the result of Him walking with them, stopping when they stopped, questioning them, teaching them and waiting for their invitation to go further?**

**vv. 30-5**

**The result? They *recognised* Him. When did they recognise Him? When He broke the bread (vv. 30-1). As He broke the bread they understood two things they hadn’t understood before – the crucifixion and the resurrection. You could say that they finally understood the secrets of death and life.**

* **Crucifixion and death: that He was broken for them, just like that bread;**
* **Resurrection and life: but that He had risen again – well, of course He had! How else could He break the bread?**

**Then they learnt another lesson: in the moment of recognition, *He disappeared from their sight (v. 31).* They were learning what all disciples have to learn in this life – that *we live by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).* As Jesus said to Thomas, *Because you have seen me you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed (Jn. 20:29).* We have not seen Him but we believe, therefore, we are blessed!**

**And then they found that their motivations had changed. You might even say that they had been *born again (Jn. 3:7). They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem (v. 33).* At the beginning of that evening, all they wanted was to get *away* from Jerusalem and have supper: now they forgot all about supper and left it on the table! They wanted to get back *at once* before the gates were locked to tell others all about Jesus.**

**So, let’s get this straight: if someone’s lost and confused, all that’s required is for Jesus to walk with them and explain things and they’ll become eager, confident Christians? Simple, job done!**

**Not quite: Jesus is coming, but, as He told Thomas and the others, when He comes it won’t be to teach us: *I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am (Jn. 14:3).* When He comes back it will be to take us home.**

**But Thomas wasn’t the only one asking questions at the Last Supper. As John also mentioned on Sunday, Philip asked to see the Father (Jn. 14:8). And Jesus said to him and to them and to us, *I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father (v. 12).* Did you get that? *Because* Jesus went back to His Father, the Father sent the Spirit. Look, if Jesus were in Jerusalem talking to the disciples, He couldn’t be on the road to Emmaus talking to some other disciples, could He? But the Spirit can be in Jerusalem and Emmaus and Laindon *all at the same time.* By the Spirit, Jesus keeps His promise to be with us all, always (Mt. 28:20). And if you believe, you have His Spirit. You have His Spirit even if, like Thomas, you *doubt* and believe. Doubting Thomas got as much of the Spirit as everyone else on the Day of Pentecost.**

**So, *you* can do what Jesus did. You can practice *paraclesis – journeying alongside. You* can draw near to those struggling in or with the faith and walk with them; *you* can allow them to progress at their own pace, stopping when they stop and proceeding when they proceed; *you* can gently question them to learn what they understand; and *you* can teach them the same Bible truths that make *your* heart burn with excitement; *you* can wait to be invited and not force your agenda on them; and, because *you* will do even greater things than Jesus, some of them will recognise Jesus in *you* (yes, *you*!) and put their faith in Him! And then they will be eager to share what they have found with others….**

**Be an evangelist by being a *paraclete,* a good companion. And, then, they or others will draw alongside *you* to help *you* along the way. Why? Because *Jesus* is the way and, as we walk with Him and He walks with us, we *must* be walking with one another….**