

Sunday Homily

5th SUNDAY OF EASTER

10 MAY 2020

YEAR A

“If you know me, you will know my Father also.
From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

John 14:7

Illustration

In Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet says, laughingly, that she first realised that she loved Mr Darcy when she saw his wonderful estates at Pemberley. Although Elizabeth is mocking herself in admitting that she is not unaffected by Darcy’s wealth, there is more to it than that. At Pemberley, Elizabeth sees Darcy in his own setting, in the place where he really belongs, for the first time. She sees him with people who love him and whom he loves, people who have known him since he was a child and are able to testify to his real character. So Elizabeth’s love comes not just from seeing the rich Mr Darcy, but also from seeing the true Mr Darcy.

Gospel Teaching

The disciples would probably have said that they knew Jesus very well. They had, after all, spent a considerable amount of time in his company, day and night, travelling, eating, sleeping side by side, talking for hours on end, working together. The disciples must have been pretty confident that they had seen the real Jesus.

Of course, they were probably aware that they didn’t always understand everything he said. They knew that he had his enigmatic side. They didn’t entirely understand his relationship with God or his vision for their joint mission. But they may have thought that Jesus himself was a bit confused, in need of their friendship and guidance, even. He was undoubtedly their leader, but sometimes he just had his head in the clouds and needed the help of practical men like themselves.

But now, in this time before the crucifixion, the disciples get quieter and quieter, and their questions, when they venture to question at all, get more and more perplexed. There is a kind of grim certainty about Jesus that they do not understand, and he keeps talking about a time when he will no longer be there.

They begin to see that, important as they are to Jesus, and genuine as their friendship is, there has always been another Jesus, there has always been someone who knew Jesus much better than they did, and whom Jesus knew

with an intimacy and a lack of misunderstanding that was simply of a different quality from their relationship with him. And that someone was the God whom Jesus had always called "Father".

But if the disciples were tempted to feel jealous of this relationship, so much deeper and older than their own friendship, Jesus did everything he could to reassure them. His relationship with the Father would help them to know him better. It would bring him closer to his friends, not separate him from them.

All those things about Jesus that the disciples had found hard or incomprehensible were now to become clearer, because of the light cast by the relationship between him and the Father. They had often found it difficult to follow Jesus' instructions because they just didn't understand them or see where they were going. But now, because they could see the Father, the guiding principle behind all of Jesus' actions, they would be able to enter into Jesus' mission.

Far from taking Jesus away, the Father was offering them his own friendship, as well as his lifelong knowledge of Jesus, so much more profound than the knowledge they thought they had of him. And that knowledge is the disciples' way home, and ours, too. As we get to know the real Jesus, we get to know our true home with God.

Application

It is so hard to imagine ourselves into the position of Jesus' disciples. We come to Jesus already knowing what is said about him and who he is in relation to God the Father. But the disciples had to make a huge imaginative leap as they realised that the relationship with the Father was the defining relationship for Jesus. Until they saw him there, in his own setting, where he really belonged, they could not love the real Jesus, because they did not know him truly.

Jesus tells his disciples that following him and keeping his commandments will bring us into his relationship with the Father. But this is no mere mechanical obedience that is being asked of us. This is the obedience born of comprehension.

We can only understand Jesus when we see him with his Father. But the minute we see that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we are part of it. This is not exclusive relationship, but utterly inclusive. The love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit has room for us, too.