

OUR NEED TO BELONG: 5TH SUNDAY EASTER (A)

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Marshall McLuhan, commentator on means of communication, once wrote: '*We drive into the future looking through the rear-vision mirror.*' The Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, once said: '*We live forward, but we understand backwards.*' So on Sundays and at other times, we go backwards to the life of Jesus, so that for now and for the future, we might become better people, his kind of people. Today we find ourselves tuning in to the start of the conversation between Jesus and his disciples at the Last Supper. But before we do that, I'd like to start with something sad and disturbing that is happening in Australia, in order to highlight the need to belong and to feel at home, which Jesus talks about.

On the edge of Melbourne's suburbs, the bodies of more than one hundred '*street kids*' lie under mounds of red earth at the Bulla cemetery. Nothing marks their graves, not even a simple cross. The only signs there warn of snakes and rabbit burrows in a stretch of dry, cracked earth. Only one young person has been identified by a gravestone and a name. The Herald-Sun has described this place as '*Melbourne's saddest cemetery*'. For whatever reason, those buried there, homeless in death, were also homeless in life. They were found dead in dark alleys and '*squats*', unnamed and unclaimed by any relative or friend. For them '*home*' was about relationships deprived, denied, or abused. We can at least trust, as Jesus has asked us to do, that they have finally found a home with the risen Lord in his Father's house, where there are more than enough rooms to go round.

All of us need to belong and feel at home. All of us long for a haven of peace and rest, a kind of oasis where we can recover from the storms of life. Jesus was aware of this human longing, and found it himself in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, his friends at Bethany. He tells his followers, ourselves included, that he is going to prepare them a home for the journey's end.

He says too that no map is needed to get there. For he himself is the way, the way to the destination, which is the company of God forever.

Not only is he the way to living with God, he is also the truth about God. For he himself is God embodied in a human being, the flesh and blood mirror of God, the human expression of God, the human face of God, God's body-language.

He is also the life of God. By his being present to us, and our being present to him, we live in God and God lives in us. Though he is no longer with us on earth as a physical person, whom we can look at, listen to, and speak to face-to-face, he is always with us just the same, always with us as our way, truth, and life. '*Believe in me,*' he says. '*Trust me,*' he says. Not to do so is risky. For out there in our complex and difficult world, it's too easy to become puzzled and confused about the ultimate meaning of life and about our final destiny, and getting quite lost in all our searching and exploring.

So today, in our Eucharist, let us acknowledge Jesus Christ as our way, our truth, and our life, and let us re-commit ourselves to being with him in life and in death. And today too, let us ask

him to help us recognise his face in the faces of fellow human beings, lost and broken, and to do all we can to wipe away their tears and comfort them in their distress, brokenness and bewilderment. Many asylum seekers languishing in cruel and hard-hearted situations come to mind immediately.

By continuing the work of Jesus on earth - seeing his face in the distraught or disfigured faces of fellow human beings, and relieving his sufferings in those whose lives are wracked with physical, mental or emotional pain - we will keep up with Jesus, as we journey with him along the road that leads to God.

His road leads to peace, a fulfilling and satisfying peace, a peace that is unavailable in any other way.