

The Only Way to God – Homily for Easter V - 2023

There are many people today who view Jesus Christ as a friendly, wise, ecumenical teacher. Also, there are those who view Him as a great religious leader among religious leaders such as Buddha, Mohammed and Krishna. Such views, while popular, are not based on the Bible or on teaching of Jesus Himself. In fact, the sad truth is that the more a typical liberal Christian and a liberal secularist learns about the extraordinary claims of Christ, the more they are likely to be highly offended by His teaching.

They will be offended by Christ's explosive and amazing claims about His own person and work, because they have substituted a 'false christ' for the true Saviour of the New Testament. They have created an idol, a human fantasy if you like, that is based on secular humanistic or sentimental wishful thinking. It does no-one any good because the 'Gentle Jesus, the nice teacher' of their sentiment offers absolutely no possibility of salvation.

With this thought in mind we come to one of the most exclusive (and to many offensive) sayings of Jesus in today's Gospel when our Lord says: "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" To those who are believers, this is one of the most glorious and comforting statements in the Scripture. But, to those who do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, it comes off as the arrogant ravings of a madman.

As we look at Jesus' categorical statement, it is important to keep in mind that this statement is designed to focus our attention on who Jesus Christ really is. He is the one who redeems sinners and reconciles them to God. Our Lord uses the ignorance of the disciples as an occasion to focus their attention on Himself and the gospel of salvation.

The first thing Our Lord says is, "*I am the way.*" He does not say that he is a way to the Father, as if He were one alternative among many. He is "*the way.*" He is the only way. He also does not say that He points men to the way, or that He is a guide to the way, but that He Himself in His own person is "*the way.*"

If we are to be forgiven and if our destiny is to be with God in eternity we must go to Jesus. By faith we must embrace His person and work. As the Saviour said to the

disciples on another occasion, “*Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.... I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture*” (Jn. 10:7, 9).

The second of Our Lord’s amazing self-descriptions is that He is “*the truth.*” This statement means much more than the reality that our Lord was a teacher of truth or a great prophet who told people truths about the Father. He is the divine Word. The source of all truth is in His person. The root of all knowledge and meaning is found only in Him. When Jesus says “*I am the truth,*” He is referring to His essential being from which the truth of words necessarily flows. It also refers to His incarnate state, for Christ is the full and final revelation of God and thus to know anything correctly as to its true meaning and purpose, one must first study Jesus and have faith in Him. Paul makes this point when he says of Jesus that in Him “*are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (Col. 2:3). As Christians, our view of theology, reasoning, factuality, philosophy and living must start with the Christ of the New Testament. Since Christ is God made manifest, all real wisdom originates in Him. Since Jesus is the source of redemption, all spiritual enlightenment and knowledge comes from Him. Our Saviour in His person and in His work is truly the sole key to the storehouse of all God’s riches.

Our Lord’s third assertion is that He is “*the life.*” Jesus is the source and foundation not only of all physical life but all spiritual life as well. When we speak of Jesus as ‘*the life*’ we are speaking of His person and His work. The New Testament teaches that He is the “author,” “captain” or “pioneer” of salvation in the most comprehensive sense of the term. There is a vital union that exists between all Christian believers and Christ during His life, death and resurrection. Let me put that this way: When He conquered sin and death on the cross, His victory was ours. When He rose from the dead, we rose unto life with Him. Our Saviour is the *vine and we are the branches* (Jn. 15:5). He is *the fountain of living water* (Jn. 4:10), He is “*the resurrection and the life*” (Jn. 11:25), He is the “*bread of life*” (Jn. 6:51). He is “*the beginning, the firstborn from the dead*” (Col. 1:18). From Jesus and Him alone we derive spiritual life and nourishment. His resurrection is the reason that Christians have and live in newness of life.

Think of these well known words of Our Lord's: "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, yet shall he live*" (Jn. 11:25). Jesus does not simply say that He will give resurrection and life but that He Himself IS the resurrection and the life. He is the very source of eternal life. We who place our trust and hope in Christ will possess the life of the age to come. In the book of Revelation, Jesus himself says to St John, "*I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore. And I have the key of Hades and of Death*" (Rev. 1:18).

After the threefold exclusive claims of Christ, "*I am the way, I am the truth and I am the life*" our Lord essentially repeats His statement in a different way by saying: "*No one comes to the Father except through Me*" (v. 6). In saying this, Jesus is making sure that there is no misunderstanding of His words. No person will be saved and enter heaven to be with God unless they believe in Christ, come to baptism, and are redeemed by Him. The only righteousness that God will accept for entrance into life is Christ's perfect righteousness. The only person who ever lived to conquer sin, death and the grave is our Saviour – the divine-human Mediator.

There is nothing hard or difficult about our Lord's statement. Actually, it is crystal clear. Take away Jesus, and the way, the truth, and the life are gone: no way, no truth, and no life are left. "*No one comes to the Father except through me*" is absolute and final. All hope of God and heaven outside of Jesus is vanity and worse. Without Jesus and His work there is no salvation, no redemptive truth, no spiritual life and light, and consequently no way to heaven to live in bliss with the Father.

Orthodox Christian faith has always been perfectly clear about this: The claims of Christ are exclusive, absolute, and totally true. Our Lord is the only and ultimate solution to all of man's problems due to sin. Instead of enmity, alienation and wrath, Jesus is the way to God. He removes all impediments to fellowship and communion with God. With the eyes of faith we must look to Jesus, suffering, bleeding and dying for our sins. We must look to Him and trust in His victorious resurrection, ascension and heavenly mediation. In doing so we behold our blessed Redeemer. He is the only way to God, the only door to heaven, the only Mediator between God and man. Do not ever forget the Lord's precious words: "*No one comes to the Father except through Me.*"