**Sunday Gospel thoughts**

Sunday 4th May 2025 (3rd Sunday of Easter) John 21.1-19

Today’s Gospel takes up most of chapter 21, the final chapter in John’s Gospel. This chapter is sometimes argued to be an appendix to the Gospel (with the last two verses of the previous chapter the actual ending). You can decide that for yourself! However, as Nick King points out (and I am with him on this) ‘we have seen sufficient mysterious introductions and connections in the course of reading this Gospel to know that we cannot always be sure of too-confident conclusions of this sort’. In this chapter, Peter is the focus and it contains some rather wonderful details, like the picture of Jesus cooking fish by the sea of Galilee. Some have poured PhD theses into working out the significance of the number of fish (153) but maybe the point is that it was a lot of fish! It’s interesting how simply switching sides, and perhaps perspectives yielded an abundance of food. For me that is where the wonder of the ‘follow me’ invitation and command connects. Sometimes it just takes a little shift to bring about change and embark on the journey of being a disciple.

*Can you think of a time when you shifted perspective and gained new insight?*

*What might be an area of growth in your own community that might be helped by letting the net down on the other side of the boat?*

Sunday 11th May 2025 (4th Sunday of Easter) John 10.22-30

Last Sunday’s Gospel left us with the invitation to ‘follow me’. Today’s Gospel invites us to explore more deeply who Jesus is. Even in this Easter season when we have stood with the disciples and seen the empty tomb and when we have borne witness to Jesus’ resurrection here today we know once more that Jesus is God incarnate. ‘The Father and I are one’, Jesus tells the people who gathered around him. This phrase is highly charged and significant in John’s Gospel, ‘I Am’ is an assertion of divine identity. It is a bold claim of course, but one we know in our lives to be true.

*How would you explain who Jesus is to someone who had never heard of him?*

*Can you think of a time when you discovered something new about Jesus? What was it and how did it affect you?*

Sunday 18th May 2025 (5th Sunday of Easter) John 13.31-35

The ‘he’ at the start of this Gospel reading is Judas who in the preceding verses has been instructed by Jesus to do what he has to do (that is, to betray Jesus) quickly. This then enables Jesus to be glorified. Significantly, this will continue in Jesus’ absence by the action of people loving one another: the new and greatest commandment. So simple and clear yet so hard at times, such is the journey we take as human beings and as disciples.

*Just for yourself, can you think of a time when you have been challenged in a friendship and when you have found it difficult to love that person as Jesus commands us here?*

*Where have you seen a community come together in hope and as disciples in good relationships with each other?*

Sunday 25th May 2025 (6th Sunday of Easter) John 5.1-9

There are two options for today’s Gospel. I have chosen the second option if only for the fact that here is a good example of why it is necessary to keep reading beyond this passage. What happens next might not be expected from what goes before. The man who is healed ends up reporting Jesus to the authorities. While this may seem stark, it does provide a reminder of the complexity of the Gospel narrative and the way in which within the Easter journey there is hurt and betrayal. The resurrection however triumphs over all of this and fir that we say with even firmer acclaim, alleluia, Christ is risen, he is risen indeed, alleluia!

*Spend a bit of time with the whole of this episode. What do you make of it and how do you view it in the light of this Easter season?*