

**FR. JOHN WARFEL – EASTER 5 – MAY 3, 2026**

Do you have a favorite passage of scripture,  
Words you know by heart,  
Words of comfort and strength that you return to again and again?  
Yes, I bet you do.

The opening of today's gospel is my favorite passage  
*Let not your hearts be troubled*  
*Believe in God believe also in me*  
*In my father's house there are many dwelling places*

Whenever I'm asked to preside at a funeral or Requiem Mass  
And the family leaves the choice of readings up to me,  
I always choose this passage from the 14<sup>th</sup> Chapter of John.  
A passage known as *The Farewell Discourse*,  
Jesus' final instructions, his last pep talk with the disciples

Of the four gospels, John's gospel, the *mystical* gospel  
Is by far the most challenging.  
Unlike Matthew, Mark and Luke,  
John isn't simply a narrative of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus  
It is a theological discourse  
The whole point of John's gospel is to reveal that Jesus and the Father are One.

It even starts out complicated:  
*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God*  
*And the Word WAS God*  
*He was in the beginning with God.*  
*All things came into being through him,*  
*And without him not one thing into being*

None of the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke  
Go to such pains to present a theological argument for the Incarnation

But every now and then  
John's gospel says something clearly and directly,  
No need to ponder over each word to discover the underlying theology

Thankfully the opening of the reading we just heard is a case in point  
Even I can understand what Jesus is saying  
(otherwise you'd probably be hearing a sermon on *Acts* or *1 Peter* this morning)

To paraphrase, Jesus says *Don't be troubled. Don't worry.*  
*Believe me when I tell you that,*  
*in my Father's House, there are many dwelling places*  
*There is plenty of room*  
*What's more, I'm going to prepare a place just for you*  
*I promise.*

*Do you think for a minute that I'd make that kind of promise if it weren't true*  
*Would I be so callous, so cruel to say that I go to prepare place for you,*  
*If such a place did not exist?*

*I said it, so count on it*  
*One day I will come again and take you to this place,*  
*This place where I am;*  
*So that we may be there together forever.*

Wondrous, hopeful words.  
Words of immeasurable comfort  
At a funeral or in any solitary moment of isolation and abandonment,  
Words that speak of the sure and certain hope of resurrection  
Words proclaimed throughout these great 50 Days of Easter  
It's a promise, you can't get more direct or succinct than that.

But then Jesus adds:  
*You know the way to the place I am going*  
Suddenly our neat little passage becomes a bit murky  
*We don't know the way to the place where he is going?*  
*Didn't he just say that he'd come back for us and take us there himself?*

So like Thomas we ask; *wait a minute Lord,*  
*We don't know where you are going so how can we know the way?*  
And Jesus responds, *I am the way and the truth and the life.*  
So much for our uncomplicated passage,  
Sounds like a major theological point is being made here.

It is; fortunately it's nothing new,  
Nor is it terribly complicated.  
For us it all boils down to this:  
For us, **Jesus is God.**

Jesus is **the way**, the way to the Father, because He is the Father  
Jesus is **the truth** because God does not lie  
Jesus is **the life** because God is the Source of life, Larger Life, life after life

For us, Jesus is God,  
The very touchstone between us and the Transcendent Creator

Whenever we say yes to God's Flow  
Whenever we participate in God's continuously unfolding Creation  
We find **the way** because we *participate* in the way  
We find **the truth** because God doesn't make promises God doesn't keep  
And we find **the life**, our own life, our life as it is meant to be lived:  
In active participation, co-creation with God.

Bear with me now,  
Because a troublesome and contentious verse pops up next:  
*No one comes to the Father except through me*  
Does this mean that only Christians go to heaven?

Many people answer: *Yes, absolutely yes*  
*That's what this scripture means.*  
*Christians only; others need not apply.*

Some go even further,  
They claim that only certain Christians go to heaven,  
Only those who yield to the authority of a particular church  
Or only those who interpret scripture in a certain way.

So what do we do with this red letter verse,  
This statement attributed to Christ in John's gospel  
What is its underlying theological truth?

I do not believe that this is an expression of Divine exclusion

It is simply another way of saying what John continuously says:

Jesus is God

You don't encounter one without encountering the other

No one comes to the Father except through me.

When non-Christians experience God, and they do of course;

Because the Incarnation of Christ is truly a **universal** mystery

When non-Christians experience God, they experience Christ.

They may have different names and certainly different concepts of Deity

But it's still an experience, an encounter with the Incarnate Christ.

The Incarnate Christ is bigger than the Gospel of John

Larger than the Bible itself,

The Incarnate Christ is even bigger than Christendom,

Certainly larger than any individual church.

People can experience Christ without knowing anything about the life of Jesus

It just makes a whole lot more sense when they do.

And that's our job, the Great Commission

Before all else, we are called to share our faith

To share the Good News of the Way, the Truth and the Life

It's all about the Incarnation

From the dawn of Creation,

God wanted to be part of The Creation so much that God became one of us

It was the only way God could experience **otherness**

And it was the only way for us to experience the transcendent God

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ,

The living response to all our restlessness

The answer to the countless questions of our souls,

Including the most basic of all human questions:

Is there a God? Does God love me?

And perhaps most poignant of all:

What happens to me when I die?

*Do not let your hearts be troubled.*

*Believe in God, believe in me.*

*In my Father's house there are many dwelling places.*

*If it were not so, would I have told you that I go and prepare a place for you?*