

## Views from the Pews – Finding the Way

Today we read one of the most famous and reassuring passages of Scripture: the first few verses of John 14. In an atmosphere of fear and tension, Jesus had already told his disciples that he was about to go away. They had been brought up on First Testament stories about the strong right arm of Yahweh and the dramatic demonstrations of divine power, like Elijah's triumph over the priests of Baal (1 Kings 18:38). They had witnessed Jesus' power over evil spirits, and heard him grieving over the Pharisees' ignoring the real teaching of the great prophets. They had watched his compassion and healing ministry, and certainly they all accepted that he was indeed the Messiah, but were still struggling to adjust their ultimate expectations of him. They were all too well aware that the Temple authorities were seeking to kill him, but could not believe that he would allow that to happen. They asked where he was going, and got only the enigmatic answer, "where I am going you cannot follow me now". Their confusion was entirely understandable.

But, with Judas already on his way to fetch the arresting party (John 13:31), and Peter's desperate attempt to protect Jesus at any cost dismissed by a humiliating prediction of betrayal to come, Jesus launched into an extraordinary farewell discourse. There is immeasurable calm strength and compassion behind his words "Let not your hearts be troubled; [you already] believe in God; believe also in me". The same words have always fortified the anxious and the downright terrified through every kind of fright imaginable.

The puzzling phrase "In my Father's house are many rooms" means that God's love includes everyone. "I go to prepare a place for you ... and you know the way where I am going" assures us that Jesus went through death and resurrection to guarantee us of permanent fellowship with God.

When Thomas again asked, "...but we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus told us, so we ought now to be rejoicing and secure against all evils. But we have found, over the centuries, that it isn't as easy as that. An anonymous poem points out the problem:

I am the Way, but you don't follow me.  
I am the Truth, but you don't believe in me.  
I am the Life, but you don't live in me.  
If you're unhappy, don't blame me.

- Kim King