

Gospel Reading Group

Fifth Sunday of Easter (Year A)

John 14:1-12

About today:

For the Fifth Sunday of Easter (Year A), the readings form a coherent movement from community tension to spiritual identity in Christ.

The first reading (Acts 6:1–7) presents a conflict within the Church about the care of widows. The apostles respond by discerning new forms of ministry, establishing the diaconate so that both charity and the word of God may flourish. It is a reminder that the Church’s life is both practical and sacramental.

The second reading (1 Peter 2:4–9) deepens this by describing the Church as a spiritual house, built of “living stones,” with Christ as the cornerstone. The faithful are not merely members of an institution but participants in a priestly, sacrificial people, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. This has strong Eucharistic resonance: the community gathered at Mass is itself being shaped into an offering.

In the Gospel (John 14:1–12), Jesus speaks words of comfort at the Last Supper: “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” He reveals himself as the way, the truth, and the life, and speaks of the Father’s house with many dwelling places. The intimacy between the Father and the Son becomes the foundation of the disciples’ hope, and their mission flows from this union.

Taken together, the readings invite us to see the Church as a community held together in Christ, even amid tension; a people being built into something holy; and a pilgrim body whose true home is in the Father. They also gently draw us toward the Eucharist, where Christ remains the way, gathers his people, and forms them into his Body for the life of the world.

Gospel Reading

Read the whole passage slowly a few times, keeping one or two minutes of silence between each time.

^{14:1} “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.

² In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

⁴ And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

⁷ If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸ Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.”

⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?

¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.

Broader Picture:

The Gospel for the Fifth Sunday of Easter (John 14:1–12) comes from the heart of what is often called the Farewell Discourse in Gospel of John (chapters 13–17). This is the extended teaching Jesus gives at the Last Supper, immediately after the washing of the disciples' feet and the troubling announcement of his departure and betrayal. The atmosphere is one of uncertainty and anxiety, and Jesus' opening words ("Do not let your hearts be troubled") are a direct response to the disciples' fear of losing him.

Within the structure of John's Gospel, this passage marks a transition from Jesus' public ministry to his intimate instruction of his disciples. Jesus speaks to those who must carry forward his presence in the world. The themes here – departure, mutual indwelling, and continued mission – prepare the Church to understand his death not as absence, but as a new mode of presence.

So, this reading sits at a crucial hinge: it interprets the impending Paschal mystery – death, resurrection, and ascension – not as rupture, but as fulfilment. In Johannine terms, Jesus' "going" to the Father opens the way for a deeper indwelling presence, which will soon be articulated through the promise of the Spirit. It offers a vision of the Christian life as one of trust amid uncertainty, rooted in communion with Christ who both reveals the Father and leads us into the Father's life.

Interpretation Notes:

v.1: “*Do not let your hearts be troubled...*” Invitations not to fear are central to many events in the Scriptures when God manifests his plans or his presence to humanity. However, the context here is crucial: the disciples have just heard of betrayal, denial, and Jesus’ departure. Their hearts are naturally troubled.

v.1: “*...Believe in God, believe also in me.*” What could possibly dispel the anxiety of the disciples? What could possibly counter the crippling effect of fear? Faith. For Saint Augustine of Hippo, this opening verse is not merely comfort but a call to faith as remedy for anxiety: the heart is steadied not by explanations, but by trust.

The parallel “*believe in God... believe also in me*” is striking. As Saint John Chrysostom notes, Jesus places faith in himself on the same level as faith in God, a profoundly high Christology. Classical theology sees here an implicit affirmation of the Son’s divine consubstantiality – later articulated at Council of Nicaea.

v.2: “*In my Father’s house...*” This famous verse is often used at funeral services, and in those circumstances, it is offered probably more as a comfort for the bereaved than an expression of faith.

The “*Father’s house*” is traditionally understood as fulfilment of communion with God, rather than simply a spatial heaven, and “*many dwelling places*” as degrees of participation in divine glory, corresponding to the soul’s capacity for God.

Saint Thomas Aquinas develops this: all the blessed share the same beatific vision (the unclouded vision of God), yet they differ in intensity of participation – not inequality of love, but diversity of glory.

v.3: “...*I will take you to myself...*” The Lord’s promise to his disciples is deeply personal: he will take each of them not merely to an unidentified heavenly place, not to the pearly gates, not to sit of a cloud... but “*to myself.*” The true reward of heaven is uninterrupted, unmediated dwelling with Christ himself; any imagery of place is secondary, if not possibly misleading in some cases.

Patristic writers often hold together multiple meanings here: Christ’s resurrection appearances, his coming in the Spirit, his self-giving in the Eucharist, and his final return. Theologically, this expresses that salvation is fundamentally relational union with the Lord Jesus in the Father.

vv.4-5: “...*Lord, we do not know where you are going...*” Thomas the Apostle speaks for the bewildered disciples. His question is not a failure but a necessary honesty. And here he disciple’ misunderstanding becomes the occasion for deeper revelation. Faith grows not by suppressing confusion, but by bringing it into dialogue with Christ.

v.6: “...*I am the way, and the truth, and the life...*” This verse is one of the great “I am” sayings of the Gospel of John and it stands at the heart of our understanding of the Lord Jesus. St Augustine offers a classic explanation of the saying: Christ is the way by which we go, the truth to which we go, and the life in which we abide.

v.6: “...*No one comes to the Father except through me.*” The second half of the verse should not be read not as exclusion for its own sake, but as a statement that all salvation is mediated through Christ, whether explicitly known or not (a theme developed in later theology).

v.7: “If you know me, you will know my Father also...” People can know (just intellectually) facts about the life of Jesus and key points of the Christian faith, but remain unmoved by these – this would not represent the knowledge Jesus is talking about. Knowledge here is not simply intellectual, but relational – it is participation in the divine life of Jesus.

To know Christ in this way is already to be drawn into the life of the Trinity – a key Johannine theme.

vv.8-9: “...Whoever has seen me has seen the Father...” Philip the Apostle asks for a vision of the Father, echoing ancient desires (like Moses). Jesus’ reply is not a rebuke, but an invitation to see Jesus’ ministry and life so far as a window (the only true glimpse here-and-now) into the Father.

The Son is the perfect image of the Father, not a lesser reflection. This undergirds Nicene theology – Christ is not similar to God, but fully reveals God because he shares the same divine being.

He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.
(Hebrews 1:3)

v.10: “I am in the Father and the Father is in me...” This expresses what later theology calls mutual indwelling (*perichoresis*). Saint Hilary of Poitiers uses such verse to argue against Arianism: the unity here is not moral or cooperative, but ontological – relating to their very being.

v.11: “...believe because of the works themselves...” Jesus points to his works as testimony – his signs and miracles are not proofs detached from his person, but they are manifestations of divine life in him. Thus, faith may arise either from trust in Christ’s word or from recognition of his works.

Saint John Chrysostom notes Christ’s generous and pastoral heart: he meets the disciples where they are, offering multiple paths into belief.

v. 12: “...the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do...” This is one of the most astonishing promises made by Jesus. What works, what spectacular signs will believers perform?

Although there have been and there will be miracles performed by saints, looking for glamour and glory is not necessarily the right frame of mind with which to approach this verse. St Augustine interprets “*greater works*” not as more spectacular miracles, but as the spiritual transformation of souls – the Church’s mission of bringing people into new life in Christ.

St Thomas Aquinas connects this to Christ’s “*going to the Father*”: through the Ascension and the gift of the Spirit, the Church participates in Christ’s ongoing work of salvation in a sacramental and ecclesial way.

Questions for this week:

- “Do not let your hearts be troubled...”
How might trust in Christ – encountered not abstractly, but in the Eucharist – begin to steady and hold my fears and anxieties?
- “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places...”
What does it mean for me to belong already to the “house” of the Father?
- “I will take you to myself...”
Do I see my faith primarily as following teachings, or as being drawn into a relationship with Christ himself?
- “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”
When I gaze upon the consecrated Host, or receive the Sacrament, do I allow that encounter to deepen my awareness of the Father’s love?



Scripture quotations are from *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Interpretation Notes by Father Diego Galanzino for the *Gospel Reading Group* – A discipleship group of the Parish of All Saints’ Houghton Regis, April 2026. allsaintshr.co.uk/learning