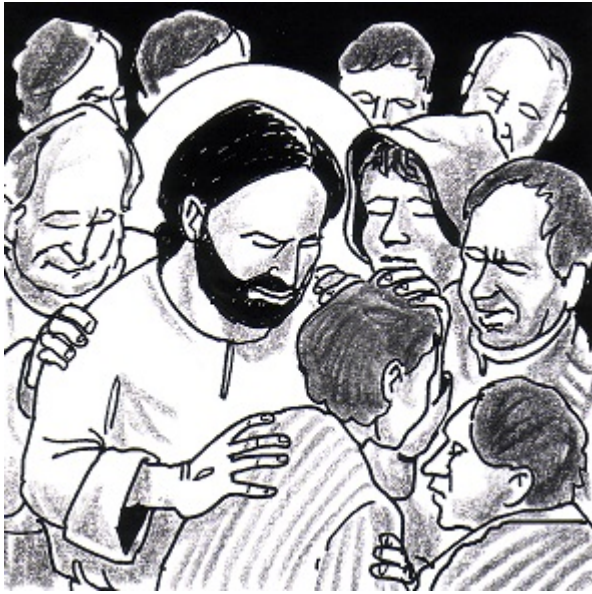


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“Do not let your hearts be troubled” (John 14:1).

Acts 13:26-33; John 14:1-6

Today’s Gospel reading is a favorite for funerals because of the comforting words Jesus offers his disciples: “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” The final discourses in John are placed at the Last Supper, where no doubt hearts were deeply troubled at the prospects of Jesus’ death. This was his last Passover in this world, and he predicted his betrayal and abandonment as they left the upper room for Gethsemane. Darkness shrouded all human hope as the coming chaos approached and overwhelmed everyone.

The discourses are artful summaries of the theology of Jesus’ identity and the transfer of his mission to his disciples, but they convey the sorrow and anxiety the Twelve must have felt. The many prophecies Paul recounts in the synagogue in Antioch about how Israel’s leaders failed to recognize Jesus and handed him over to Pilate culminated in Jesus’ death. Only in hindsight did the disciples themselves realize who Jesus really was. His resurrection from the dead confirmed the prophecies and became the basis for the missionary preaching of the church.

We mark the Easter season with the same questions the disciples had about how the death and resurrection of Jesus opens the way for us to eternal life with God. Jesus died on the cross. We will die, and the fact of death remains for everyone. How is Jesus the way, the truth and life? Only when we exhaust all human hopes and sentiments about the power of love to overcome death, the comforting projections in

art and poetry that affirm survival beyond the grave, do we enter the threshold of faith in the Person of Jesus as the only human being in history who has reversed the universal law of mortality to return from the dead. Do we believe him, in him, in the experience of early church, in the generations of believers who have gone before us, in the cloud of witnesses who await us on the other side of death?

“Do not let your hearts be troubled” is Jesus’ invitation to faith. Live your faith by trusting that a full and generous journey through this world, giving yourself away, offering your time and energy and gifts in the community, responding to the needs of others, that this is not only the secret of a happy life here but also the beginning of eternal life. This is our path because Jesus is the Way. This is the Truth because Jesus said so. This is our life because Jesus is Life.

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