

The light that illuminates.

Over these past few weeks we've had a number of funerals in the parish. They have been sad events in which deeply loved members of our community have been mourned and grieved for. At the same time in the course of the celebration of these funerals it has been made apparent that for the Christian, such sadness though hard and upsetting, is nevertheless coupled with both a joy and a hope of the life to come in heaven for the one who has died. At these funerals one of the readings that was read was the familiar one from John's gospel when at the Last Supper, Jesus tells the disciples that he is going away to prepare a place for them. He tells them that he will come back to take them to this place and he lets them know that already they know the way to place to where he is going. Then Thomas interjects asking how can he know the way and at this point Jesus tells him: *I am the Way the Truth and the Life*. It is a beautiful exposition of what our faith in Jesus actually conveys to the world; that in Jesus and in his resurrection we discover the fulfilment and expression of all our hopes for the world and for those we love.

When you have lived with and loved those whom you mourn, whether as family, friends or colleagues, it is only natural that you savour those shared times of joy and happiness and find within them the essence of the one whom you loved. Even with the occasions of disagreement, you can still cherish and value the person notwithstanding, and it is within the context of the funeral liturgy, that such sentiments are felt and released. They become the hallmark of our prayer, as the funeral mass makes clear and they form the images that our memories become made of. This person was for those who loved him/her, the light of their world, and now seemingly this light has gone out. Memories are filled with events and stories about the person, of the times when that light really shone out and helped us when such help was needed. They may have been small things which seemed insignificant at the time, or it may have been some piece of major life changing advice that set us on our way. Whatever these moments were, they reflect the person we knew and they remain as an abiding reality of the good that was conveyed.

In the gospel which we read today, Jesus tells us that each one of us is to be a light in the world. A light which is to illumine the pathway to the truth and the life that Jesus offers to us. We wonder how we are to be such lights as we often consider ourselves to be unsuitable to such a calling. In a way this is the "Thomas" moment or response, a reaction in which we tend to do ourselves down, telling ourselves and others that no way could we ever be the "lights" that Jesus envisages. Jesus will have none of it. He knows that we all have the potential to shine in the world and in the sight of men and his reply to the "Thomas" response is to call us to resolve to follow his way, and his truth, so that it will lead us into his life. In other words Jesus asks us to model our life as best we can on his life.

Between now and the beginning of Lent, the Sunday gospels will lay before us the

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pathway we are to take. As we read from the Sermon on the Mount, we explore the teaching of Jesus as he calls on us to look anew at our lives and see if they cannot be reappraised in the light of his truth, illuminating a pathway to a life that grows in love and takes us through the mystery of death to the place where his has gone to and prepared a place for us.