

KATHLEEN RUSHTON explains how Jesus sends the Spirit to reannounce truths we may not have had the insight, knowledge or understanding to hear before now.

IT'S TIME TO HEAR THE TRUTH

Jesus's words in John 16:12-15, proclaimed on Trinity Sunday, show how he remains with us *through the work of the Holy Spirit*.

The scene is the last supper (Jn 13-17). After the footwashing (Jn 13:1-30), Jesus gave a farewell discourse (Jn 13:31-16:33) and he prayed (Jn 17:1-26). His discourse has three parts: a beginning discourse (Jn 13:31-14:31), a central one (Jn 15:1-16:4), and a final one (Jn 16:4-33).

Cultural Framework

The earliest Christians would have recognised this talk by Jesus as a farewell address. It was a genre they knew when a well-known leader or teacher, such as Jacob (Gen 49) and Moses (Deut 31-33), gave instructions before death. In the ancient world the dying leader's or

teacher's farewell address contained their last will and testament. And it wasn't about goods and property as we have today.

The leader about to die expressed his deep concern for the wellbeing of the group in general as well as individuals after his death. He announced that his death was about to happen, he reviewed his life to set the record straight, stressed that relationships were to continue and predicted the good things as well as hard times ahead. He encouraged his followers to practise virtues and avoid vices. He named a successor, gave a legacy and finished with a prayer.

Two Levels

We find this framework and purpose used in the evangelist's creative presentation of Jesus's farewell address. Jesus's final words are of consolation and encouragement. And there is movement between two levels of time.

In the first level we are taken back to the last supper and the end

of Jesus's life on Earth and the actual situation of the disciples. Jesus talks of "going away", meaning he was departing from his present life in his suffering and death on the cross. His "return" to the disciples was to be as the risen Jesus.

In the second level we have the situation of the disciples after Jesus has departed this Earth.

As we read we can be aware that this situation includes us in our times and places.

Seeking Deeper Meaning

In the text, Jesus repeats the verb "declare" (NRSV) or "tell" (JB) three times (Jn 16:13, 14, 15). We find clues to its significance in the Greek Old Testament when this verb has the sense of re-announcing what has been heard previously – mysteries *already communicated*. So Jesus is encouraging the disciples to face the hard times

16 June - Trinity Sunday:
John 16:12-15

Kathleen Rushton RSM lives in Ōtautahi Christchurch where, in the sight of the Southern Alps and the hills, she continues to delight in learning and writing about Scripture.



ahead by seeking deeper meaning in what has already happened.

Scripture scholar Raymond Brown explains: "The declaration of the things to come consists in interpreting in relation to each coming generation the contemporary significance of what Jesus has said and done. The best Christian preparation is not an exact knowledge of the future but a deep understanding of what Jesus means for one's own time."

In other words, Jesus's ministry and trial are over. But the implications of his death and resurrection for all disciples and for all creation need to be worked out generation by generation in every place.

As Jesus knew the hearts of those earliest disciples, Jesus knows we are concerned with troubles (Jn 14:1, 27). He said: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (Jn 16:12). When they, and we today can bear it, the Spirit will re-announce, re-proclaim what has been received from Jesus who was sent by God (Jn 16:14).

God, Jesus and the Spirit

Jesus's identity and his relationship with God are the central issues. Jesus is "the way" because he is "the word made flesh" who reveals who God is ("truth"). When people come to believe *into* him, they share in eternal "life". In the work of guiding disciples, Jesus and the Spirit share similar titles. Jesus is "the truth" (Jn 14:6) and the Paraclete is the Spirit of Truth (Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13) who will "guide you into all truth".

The Greek word *pneuma*/Spirit is used throughout the Scriptures for the Hebrew *ruah* meaning the "wind". Sometimes it is translated as "breath" – essential for life. Both images, wind and breath, portray the Spirit's unseen wonder known by what it does, the effect it has and how it feels. The Spirit flows through all creation bringing life and love.

Just as Jesus teaches and guides (Jn 6:59; 7:14, 8:20), so does the Paraclete (Jn 16:13; 14:26). The Paraclete's teaching glorifies Jesus (Jn 16:14) and Jesus glorifies God (Jn 14:13; 17:4). As Raymond Brown says: "The one who Jesus calls 'another

Paraclete' is really another Jesus. Since the Paraclete can only come when Jesus departs, the Paraclete is the presence of Jesus when Jesus is absent." Jesus named the Spirit as his successor who is a bridge between the past of his historical life and the post-Easter life of the Church in this world God so loves (Jn 3:16).

The ecumenical Christian Church is one of the largest groups of people in the world. It is time for us to "bear" to hear the truth and, enabled by the Spirit, transform our faith into action.



In Our Generation and Place

We can ask what the Spirit is re-announcing to us about the truth of God *already communicated* in what Jesus said and did. There are pointers. For example, the World Council of Churches recently released the *Roadmap for Congregations, Communities and Churches for an Economy of Life and Ecological Justice*

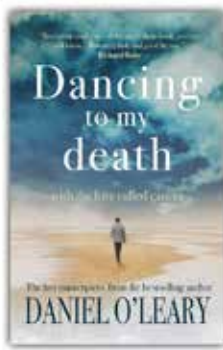
saying: "We invite congregations, communities and churches to join a pilgrimage for an economy of life and climate, to commit to make changes in the way we live, to share successful ideas and to encourage one another."

And the United Nations released the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) report on the global state of biodiversity to date. It reveals that 1 million species are threatened with extinction. It says: "We tried to document how far in trouble we are to focus people's minds, but also to say it is not too late if we put a huge amount into transformational behavioural change."

God Acts

We could think it is coincidence that these two reports were released so close to each other. But God acts through incidences, not coincidences. Jesus's words echo through the generations: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (Jn 16:12). The ecumenical Christian Church is one of the largest groups of people in the world. It is time for us to "bear" to hear the truth and, enabled by the Spirit, transform our faith into action. Pope Francis encourages us: "The Spirit, infinite bond of love, is intimately present at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways" (*Laudato Si'* par 238). 🐦

Photo by Dawid Zawila on Unsplash



Dancing to My Death by Daniel O'Leary

As a priest, teacher, prodigious author & retreat facilitator, it was a natural instinct for Daniel to journal his thoughts & feelings during his cancer journey. This book is an incredibly raw & honest account. It pulls no punches in terms of Daniel's struggles to cope with his diagnosis, the challenges of cancer treatment & the emotional rollercoaster of facing his own death.

PREORDER! **\$39.99 + postage**

Pleroma
Christian Supplies

Visit Us:
38 Higginson Street, Otane, Hawke's Bay
35km's south of Hastings
Only 800m off SH2

Freephone 0508 988 988 www.christiansupplies.co.nz Email: order@pleroma.org.nz