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**From the Selected Works of Reverend Lawrence E. Frizzell, D.Phil.**

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# I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life

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## **I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life**

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## **Fifth Sunday of Easter**

Sunday Readings for May 22, 2011 for Cycle A:

Acts 6:1-7; Ps 33; 1 Pt 2:4-9; Jn 14:1-12

### **I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE**

*Lawrence E. Frizzell*

Sometimes when we face problems in parish or family life, we may day-dream about how wonderful the early days of Christianity must have been. Surely those who heard the Apostles and other teachers in Jerusalem were so privileged! But did they cope with the challenges of daily life easily? A careful reading of the New Testament and especially the Acts of the Apostles shows that they too constantly needed help to live the Gospel message of justice, charity and peace.

Even in Jerusalem, the City of Peace, the early Church faced issues of insensitivity or discrimination. Those whose families had come from other lands and had not learned Hebrew or Aramaic were at a disadvantage. How often do we think of offering a helping hand to the immigrants from other lands who come to our parish? A simple effort to introduce oneself can begin to break the language barrier, but often team work is needed to assist people in need. Certainly some of our complaints will seem petty compared with what they face!

The Apostles selected seven men to supervise practical aspects of the community's life and the needs of its members. Organized effort and delegation of authority provided the key to solving difficulties, so that the Church could grow and spread. The first prerequisite for those offering service in Christ's name is not merely sensitivity to others, but a prayerful response to the Holy Spirit. More than social involvement is demanded of the Christian. While helping others with their hunger, suffering and problems, we quietly suggest to them that only God provides the fulfillment of the deepest human needs.

When St. John's Gospel records the disciples' experience at their last meal with Jesus, its profound teachings are presented within the context of their limited perception of the event's meaning. They were confused about Jesus' departure and wanted to go with him. Much is conveyed in a few words; they would require much prayerful reflection to unpack the meaning of a statement like "I am the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6).

People on a journey must know the way; Thomas learns, however, that intimate association with Jesus offers much more than knowledge. His words constitute a succinct statement about his role as their leader. He is the king (Jn 1:49; 19:19) who guides the people of God through the pilgrimage of life along the way, whose goal is union with the heavenly Father. He is the prophet (Jn 6:14), like Moses, who teaches the Truth, which is essentially God's fidelity to his word, a commitment that demands our careful listening so that we can obey his will. He is the good shepherd, the priest who lays down his life for his flock (Jn 10:11,18) so that all may have the gift of life in its fullness, communion with the living God. These are the deepest human needs: to know the purpose of life and the way to achieve it, to believe without doubt that the most

profound truth is expressed in fidelity, and to live on a level deeper than that of the senses so that one can triumph over death.

When St. John recorded Jesus's sign of multiplying loaves and fishes at Passover time, he noted that people thought of Moses and of God's gift of manna. They exclaimed: "This is truly the Prophet" (6:14) and they wanted to proclaim him king. However, the living bread which brings eternal life can be given only if offered in sacrificial obedience. "The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world" (6:51). What Jesus does is so identified with his very person that he can say: "I am the way, the truth and the life." May we grow in our response to his presence and gifts!