

Reflection Saturday 3rd Week Easter 2024

The Gospel captures a moment of crisis for the followers of Jesus. Some who have responded to the call of Jesus to follow him and become his disciples are now struggling to accept the claims he has been making for himself, particularly his claim to be the Bread of Life that has come down from heaven, and that his blood was the real drink. In response, Jesus wonders what they will make of his further claim to *'ascend to where he was before'*, to return to the Father who sent him through his forthcoming death and resurrection. Surely all this was way too much for them to take in?

John the evangelist says that, *'many of his disciples left him and stopped going with him'* after this. Jesus could not and would not hold on to disciples against their will. There will always be people, including good people, who will leave the community of disciples, for a variety of reasons. We can all feel impoverished when those who have been part of our community of faith no longer wish to remain.

At this moment of crisis, Jesus took what might seem to us to be a risk. He asked those left behind, *'What about you? Do you want to go away too?'* Jesus wanted them to stay but he needed them to *want* to stay. The question *'Do you want to go away too?'* is addressed to each one of us. Now we each have to give our own personal response. It would be hard to find a more appropriate response to Jesus' question than the that of Peter, which we are invited to make our own at every Eucharist, *'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe, we know that you are the Holy One of God'*. That is why Jesus handed him the keys to build his church on earth.