

## THE WORD

Year B • Season Colour: White • Psalter Week 2

### FROM SERVANTS TO FRIENDS (JOHN 15:9-17)



The Fourth Gospel opens with the declaration that “In the beginning was the Word.” Words are a means of communication and the Bible is the record of God’s self-revelation to human beings.

One of the ways in which God communicates with humans in the Jewish Scriptures is by the female figure of Wisdom. She is the means by which God creates and by which God invites people into a personal relationship. Her purpose is to teach people about the things that are above, to pronounce the truth, to instruct in what pleases God and how to do his will and thus lead them to life and immortality.

The symbols Wisdom employs for her instruction are food (bread) and drink (water and wine) and she invites people to eat and drink. Her educating of her disciples involves instructing her disciples (her children), testing them until they love her and become friends of God. All of these characteristics we find in John’s presentation of Jesus, and in the Gospel reading today Jesus tells his disciples that he is not calling them *servants* any more but *friends*. Their instruction is complete. Now it is time for them to change from being merely disciples to being *apostles*. One of the major differences between John’s account and those of the other three evangelists is that in the Fourth Gospel the disciples have no active part to play during the ministry of Jesus. Once Jesus is glorified on the cross and bestows his Spirit on the disciples, then they will carry on his work, but only then. During their final meal, Jesus sets this in context by speaking of laying down his life for his friends, a signal that his death is at hand. By bearing much fruit, the disciples will join Jesus in glorifying the Father. The condition for this is to love one another. ■

## REFLECT

The Church is not a democracy! So we are reminded from time to time. It is easy to think of the Church as an institution, a hierarchical structure. However, our Gospel reading recently presented us with the vision of the vine and the branches, something organic, living, fruitful and interdependent. The expression used in the official teaching of the Church is that of the People of God, within whom ordained ministers have their place.

In this time between Easter and Pentecost we are invited to reflect on our choice to be a member of the People

of God, a disciple of Jesus, that choice which we reaffirmed at the Easter Vigil or on Easter Sunday. The Gospel today reminds us that to be a Christian does not simply mean having been baptised: it involves a personal relationship with Jesus which should manifest itself in a fruitful Christian life. In some ways, it can be more comfortable to envisage the Church as an institution because then we can minimise our part in it and our responsibility for its life and mission. Perhaps between now and Pentecost we might all reflect on what it means to be a disciple among disciples and how we can make our local church more of a communion. ■

## DO

Look at a book or newspaper. Listen to a programme on the television or radio or through your headphones. Think of how words are important for people communicating with one another. Jesus is the Word of God. The Bible is the Word of God. What is your reply?



## LEARN

There are no *apostles* in the Fourth Gospel, only *disciples*.

The female figure of Wisdom is presented in the Jewish Scriptures as God’s agent of creation and communication with human beings.

Jesus is presented in the same way in John’s account of the Good News.

God’s purpose in self-revealing is to invite human persons into a relationship perhaps best described as *friendship*.

## SAY

Speak, Lord: your friend is listening.