**The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, reflects on John 14.23-29 for the Sixth Sunday of Easter, 25th May.**

St John's Gospel, chapter 14 and verse 23, Jesus said, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”

The compilers of the lectionary, you know those people who organise the readings we have Sunday by Sunday, never cease to amaze me. Yes, I realise that you have to make the break somewhere, and that if you didn't put some boundaries around the passages of scripture we read on Sundays, you'd be there all day. But some of the decisions they make are, in my view, rather odd. Today's excerpt from the 14th chapter of the Gospel of John is I think, a good example.

It begins, with the words I've just read, at verse 23. This is Jesus answering a question, only you wouldn't know he was answering a question because we haven't heard the question! We haven't heard verse 22. The question in question, is from Judas, not Judas Iscariot, the other Judas, who's saying to Jesus that all-too-human question - this is verse 22, “Lord, why is it that you reveal yourself to us, but not to the world?”

And because this is precisely the question all of us ask, why is it that some people have faith and others don't? Why do some people believe in God faithfully and fervently and others are atheists? Or, closer to home, why is it that our own children respond to faith differently? I would have thought we would at least like to know that verse 23 where our passage begins today is Jesus's answer to this very question only. Only perhaps, that's why they've started here.

The question at verse 22 is very clear. The answer at verse 23, well, isn't. In fact, at first sight, Jesus appears not to be answering the question at all. He says this, let me repeat, “Those who love me will keep my word, my father will love them, we will come to them and make our home with them.” Well, that doesn't seem to be addressing the concern.

The concern is, why do you reveal yourself to us? To some people, but not to others, not to the world? And Jesus replies that he, or actually we - he is speaking of the father and the son - will make their home in us. So, the compilers of the lectionary seem to have solved the problem of this question and answer by omitting the question, thus making Jesus's words about making his home with us all sound rather lovely. Which of course it is. Yet Jesus says these words in answer to the question, how will others and how will the world know him? And I suppose the challenging and somewhat uncomfortable answer is this: Jesus will be known, but it will be through us. And then the comforting good news that God will do this by being at home in us if we let him.

In fact, Jesus, in a little while goes on to say that it is to our benefit that he, Jesus, goes away so that the Holy Spirit can come. And it is by the Holy Spirit that Jesus is born in us today. In this Easter season, we remember Jesus's astonishing, amazing appearances and his sit down and eat with us, put your fingers in the wounds the nails made, barbeque on the beach, breaking bread presence with us. But these appearances, well, they didn't happen to us, and they will come to an end. And it's now, by the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, that the presence of Jesus will be made known through those who follow him and serve him. Yes, that is through us.

We are called to be his presence today. We are the ones by whom others will judge the meaning, relevance and efficacy of the Christian faith. That doesn't mean, just to be clear, it's all our fault if members of our family don't respond to the gospel in the way that we long for them to, but it does mean that we have a responsibility. We have a responsibility to share the message of the Christian faith, and more than that, to live out and embody that message in the lives we lead. And because we fall so far short of this high ideal, Jesus says that he will come to us, that he will make his home with us, that he will love us and be alive in us and through us. He will indeed make himself known to the world, and it will be through us, through Jesus in us, and by the power of the spirit.

The annual novena of prayer, Thy Kingdom Come, starts on Ascension Day this week. We are invited to reflect on the Lord's Prayer and how we participate with God in praying for God's rule of peace to be established in the world, and we pray for those we know and love who do not yet know Christ. Go into all nations and every community, and for every person, says Jesus, and I will be with you. Make disciples. Amen.