



THE ARCHBISHOP
OF YORK

Archbishop Stephen visited Taizé with a group of pilgrims from the North of England. He gave a homily at one of the services.

'From this time, many of us disciples turned back and no longer followed him.' *John 6. 66*

This must be one of the saddest verses in the gospels.

The crowds who had been fed yesterday come back for another free lunch today.

But Jesus doesn't give them the bread they crave.

Instead, he says, 'I am the bread.'

Instead, he says his flesh and blood is food and drink.

The crowds drift away. Even the disciples grumble. Who can accept this difficult teaching?

And then – the very next verse, verse 67 – even sadder. Jesus says to the twelve 'Do you want to leave, as well?'

And standing among you here this morning - in this place which is such a beautiful place of hospitality where the youth of the world, of every nation and every denomination, are invited to receive the bread that is Jesus and to wrestle with the challenge of his teaching, which is, if this is the bread that enables us to live forever, why are the nations in tumult and why do we crave other things, and why do we reject Jesus - I need to say to you that I find following Jesus hard. That it often feels easier to walk away. That I am still learning what it means to follow in his way. That I still have a long way to go.

And at this point, Peter steps forward. Brave, brash, beautiful Peter.

'Where else can we go?' he says to Jesus.

Which I think might mean, 'I would love to go somewhere else. I would love it to be easier. If there is an exit, please show me to the door.'

But then, enormous grace filled hopefulness: 'You have the words of eternal life.'

What Peter sees in Jesus, I have seen in Jesus. His words - however challenging, however difficult, however costly - are the words of life.

When I first came to Taizé thirty years ago, one thing that struck me about this church where we gather to worship three times a day is that there are several different entrances and exits. We can approach it – or if we wish to, leave it – from many different directions.

Its centre is Jesus. It is offering his words of life.

If, like me, you are here - and perhaps even not sure why you're here, or what it means - and if following Jesus is for you hard and beautiful, then, also like me, you stand where Peter stood.

And, dear sisters and brothers, it is a good place to stand - with all our joy in knowing Jesus, and with all our trepidation.

There is nowhere else to go. For here is the word of eternal life.

Carry it with you. Let it be your guide.

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