

May 10, 2020

Fifth Sunday of Easter

One of the things that moms often do and that is make a house into a home. A house is a place to live and home is a place to thrive. When I think of coming home from school in my grade school years there are two things that stick out in my mind. One is getting off the bus and smelling the aroma of freshly baked cinnamon rolls. Ahhh, what comfort, to eat one of them, still warm and fresh out of the oven, especially on rainy, dark days. Then there were those times when things did not go so well at school. The kind of days I felt like my little world was falling apart and I knew that mom would provide a listening ear. Those are examples of what makes a house a home, a place where people will thrive. No matter that kind of experience, a person may have had growing up; God wants all of us to thrive. The way that we thrive is when we make our dwelling, our home, with God. God the Father has given us the way to live in Him, and that is through Jesus his Son, who first made his dwelling in us, in our human flesh. Jesus will teach us what it means to be thrive, to be fully alive when we dwell in Him and He dwells in us.

Jesus teaches us that in the Father's mansion there are many dwelling places. It can be easy to jump to the most obvious interpretation of these verses from St. John's Gospel and that is that Jesus is talking about the promise of our eternal dwelling place in heaven. There is truth in that understanding, which is why we so often use today's Gospel for funeral Masses. There is also the meaning the God provides for our dwelling place even now. In fact, Jesus was speaking these words to his disciples to prepare them for his suffering and death. His message was not just about the promise of heaven, but also to give them strength to face Jesus' upcoming suffering and death. When Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life", He is making such a radical claim that some people thought that he was crazy, an egomaniac. That is one of the reasons that humans put him to death. He was not just saying, "Here is a teaching, a way, a path to truth and life" he is saying *I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* For us who believe in him, he is saying to come and make our dwelling in him and he will make his dwelling in us, he is, our rock, our temple our life.

Now let's turn to the second reading, the First Letter of St. Peter, which also speaks of the spiritual home built of stone. People in Biblical times built the best of homes of stone. The homes of the poor were made of living material, wood, the organic material of the earth, and so those homes soon decayed and fell apart. Whereas ruins of the stone buildings from Jesus' time remain today. Stones are hard to the point of no longer being organic they do not easily decay. Jesus endures. Yet, First Peter says that Jesus is the living stone. Who has heard of a living stone? Yet stones can take on a new and glorious form of life; artisans carve them into beautiful images, so magnificent that they express life. Think of Michelangelo's *Pieta*. He carved marble into the image of the Madonna holding the dead body of her son and communicated both the power of death and life out of stone! Jesus, as the greatest of artisans, transformed the stone of death that once held us down into a living stone, and *he* is that living stone. Even though as a human, he died on the cross, as God, he could not undergo the decay of death. He is the living stone, and completely transformed death into new life. He, who was rejected by human beings and was put to death, now lives! We become living stones with him when we give our lives to him through the grace of baptism. With that, Jesus can use us to build a spiritual house, the Church.

Notice that no one stone can on its own, become a house. It takes many stones to build a home. Even Jesus, who is both the living stone who gives us life and the cornerstone who holds us together, needs us as his living stones to form his body, the Church. We need to believe him when he says, "whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater than these because I am going to my Father." He calls us to these greater works by being a spiritual dwelling place, a temple for the Holy Spirit to dwell, and a place for the forgotten to come. For the hungry; both those who are hungry spiritually for God and those who hunger for the basic needs of life. Place where those who feel threatened in anyway will find comfort in the face of danger, a place where people will thrive and will live. It might be as simple as giving someone a warm cinnamon roll or offering a listening ear, or something on a much larger scale. Whatever it is, our mission as Church is to provide a space where people will encounter Jesus, the way, the truth and the life.