

**May 10, 2020 Our Final Destination Homily:** The name of Anne Frank is likely familiar to many. She was the young Jewish girl who was one of the many tragic victims of the Nazi Holocaust. For much of the Second World War, she and her parents were holed up in the attic of a Dutch Christian home in Amsterdam. Today she is best remembered for her diary, which is likely the most read diary in the history of the civilized world. Less than a year before her death, she wrote in her diary words of hope in a very dark period of her young life. In April of 1944, her entry reads, "I want to go on living after my death". How should we interpret her words? Many scholars are of the view that she was speaking of her diary. That is how she will be remembered after her death. But is it beyond reason to conclude that she desired, even prayed for, eternal life. In one entry, she wrote, "Those who have courage and faith will never die in misery".

Enter Jesus.

In today's gospel (Jn. 14:1-12) the setting is an upper room on Holy Thursday. Jesus has gathered around him his disciples. It was a sorrowful meal. The atmosphere is tense. A dark cloud hovers over the group. On this night, Christ will be betrayed, denied, arrested and physically and verbally abused. Jesus prepares his inner circle of friends for his departure. He is going to leave them. The disciples are understandably distressed, and fear for the life of their teacher and master. But in his farewell discourse Jesus offers them these words of comfort. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God, have faith also in me." (Jn. 14:1) He then speaks of a place in which his disciples will dwell after the struggles of earthly life: His Father's house, a reference to heaven.

Earlier in John's gospel, Jesus made reference to his Father's House when he drove out the moneychangers in the Temple. "Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace", (Jn. 2:16) he thundered. On the night of the Last Supper, Jesus promises to arrange accommodations for them to be with him eternally. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be." (Jn. 14:3) In the hour of death, Our Lord promises his disciples to take them to heaven. Through death, Christians are taken to the Father's house.

In the spring of 2005, then Cardinal, Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) was called upon to preach the homily at Pope John Paul II's funeral mass. In his memorable sermon, he offered the following words. "None of us can ever forget how in that last Easter Sunday of his life the Holy Father, marked by suffering, came once more to the window of the Apostolic Palace and one last time gave his blessing. We can be sure that our beloved pope is standing at the window of the Father's house, that he sees us and blesses us."

Only hours before his death on the cross, Jesus offers consoling words for mourners of every age. He will bring with him into his glory all those who believe in him and have stayed faithful.

Our life has a destination. We are on our way to the Father's house!

Shortly before her death, Mother Teresa of Calcutta was asked by a reporter if she feared death. The holy nun simply smiled. She said, "Death, in the final analysis, is only the easiest and quickest means to return to God. If only we could make people understand that we came from God and that we have to go

back to Him! Death is the most decisive moment in human life. It is like our coronation to die in peace with God. Death can be something beautiful. It is like going home. He who dies in God goes home even though we naturally miss that person who has gone. But it is something beautiful. That person has gone home to God.”

Anne Frank was certainly not a Christian. Jews of every age have a right, even an obligation, to mourn her death. But as believing Christians who have a hope in life after death we can entertain the possibility that Anne Frank lives, and is in the company of Jesus and all his disciples.

No one comes to the Father except through Jesus Christ. (Jn.14:6)

Amen!