

5.3.26

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

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This morning, my friends, we have three different stories, three different images, three different directions, if you will, at work in our scriptures. And at first glance, it's hard to reconcile the three of them with each other.

In the Acts of the Apostles, in the first reading, we hear how the 12 apostles had already begun to act like the priestly board of directors. They just can't get everything done and fulfill all the needs of the fast-growing community. So, they look back into the depths of their Jewish tradition, to the time of Moses, the tradition of Moses, who appointed other elders to help him with the work of administration.

Helpers to share the burden. They gathered proven people as deacons, literally servers, not really servants, but servers, to see the different parts of their ministries. To care for the poor and for the needs of the ignored, to look after orphans and widows, and those in any kind of need. And there's some serious evidence that there were even, dare I say it? Women among those serving folks. At least for a while. Papal commissions continue to study that question. All I can say is: film at eleven.

In the Gospel, we hear the befuddlement of those same would-be priestly administrators and directors when Jesus tells them that he must return to God after he's given the full witness to God's wonderful works through his dying and his rising. And they can't get their heads around that idea. They can't accept that, even as Jesus promises that he is going to a place where they will follow one day. And that in his father's house, there are many dwelling places indeed, many mansions. They do know that without him, they will feel lost, not knowing where to stay, or where to go, or what to say, not having the security and having him at home with them.

But he assures them that he is the way home. He is the truth that will take them through this life and make them at home in this complicated world. In this world, and then, eventually, the next.

He is the life that is never lost. And he assures him that nothing good is ever lost, but is transformed, even in death. He promises that they will do, imagine this, even greater works than the works that he does.

And in the middle of it all, we hear the second letter of Peter's beautiful riff, if you will, on Psalm 118, "The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone."

And maybe it's this fundamental text, this foundational text, that helps us to bind these separate ideas together. Jesus is the living stone rejected by the builders, who becomes, through his generosity, the cornerstone of a new house built not only for us, but a house built of us. And we become the living stones that make it a temple of glory. A house where all can dwell, a house where the great are the servants of all where the lowlier are deemed of equal dignity with the mighty. A house lit by the light of Christ, inspired by his example, where the hungry are fed through the generosity of all. Where the Father's love is constantly being poured out. Actually, maybe more like a mother's love.

Next Sunday, we prepare to celebrate our mothers, living and deceased. We remember their tenderness towards us, and at the same time, their ferocity to protect us. We see that their love, as God's love, is unconditional, accepting their children when they stray as well as when they act in virtuous ways. Working to smooth out the bumps that would make us carelessly stumble. Opening a door for us to a place of safety and security. If God is our father, so, too, God is like our mothers. God builds up this house as surely as our moms and our grandmothers built up our families, mere places into homes. That home is built upon the living stones of grandparents, and parents, and aunts, and uncles, and children and grandchildren. The weak and the strong, the smart and the not so smart, the old and the young, all built together into a house where love can dwell.

And I suspect that the disciples, no less than us, looked to their own experiences, to the examples of their fathers, and their mothers, and their grandmothers, and their grandfathers, even more than they looked to the priestly caste that tried to guide them. When they needed examples of servers who care for their flocks, they looked to their families. I suspect Jesus looked to his holy family in Nazareth, in the simple carpenter's house. He promised many dwellings, many mansions, many places of shelter, refuge, and nourishment of all of us.

And that is what we are invited to be: builders and makers of a home where all of us can dwell together. Constructed on the cornerstone of Jesus, the stone rejected by the builders, who becomes the foundation of all of this. And inspired by the examples of those who've gone before us: our moms and our dads, our huge and wonderful and diverse human family. Let's work together to make the living stones of our lives into a place of welcome, of shelter, a place of loving kindness. Let's make a home where love can dwell together, in safety and security.