



Room for Everyone
5th Sunday of Easter, Cycle A
May 14, 2017 – Mother’s Day
Church of the Holy Angels

1. One of the most difficult questions for Catholics to answer is, “have you been saved?”
 - the question can seem innocent and caring but it frequently means, “Are you committed to God in the same way I am?”
 - it can feel like an accusation more than a question
 - and it implies that there is only one authentic manner of commitment, all others are wrong
 - we’ve often been made to feel as if something’s wrong with us

2. It’s one of the questions that prompted my thesis work in the area of storytelling
 - trying to help people better articulate, witness to, and share their faith
 - how we understand our faith both as similar yet unique is a grace and blessing to us as Catholics
 - and the gift of the Eucharist, sacraments, our universality and so much else is not only a blessing to Catholicism, it’s a blessing to the whole world
 - what we believe and profess, how we act and live, teach and serve, pray and give, is a gift each of us must understand, appreciate, value and share

2. In today’s Gospel Jesus says, “in my Father’s house there are many dwelling places.”
 - in other words, there is room for everyone
 - his words remind me of my mom’s table when was growing up as a kid
 - everyone was welcome, there was always plenty, everyone was made to feel at home
 - there was diversity, acceptance, love, interest in the other – no matter how different everyone was

 - since each person is a unique creation of God, there is a uniqueness to each person’s search for and encounter with God
 - it doesn’t mean that there isn’t a best way for us, but it acknowledges the diversity and validity of valid spiritual searches

3. The Gospel points out the confusion of the disciples over Jesus’ words
 - they are upset that Jesus will leave them
 - he reassures them that he is going to prepare a place where they will join him
 - but Thomas response shows that he doesn’t know where Jesus is going; how will they follow him
 - and Jesus says, “I am the way and the truth and the life”
 - Philip also misunderstands to which Jesus says, “I am in the Father, and the Father is in me.”

4. Early in the Church, at the Council of Nicea in 325, there were many arguments and some confusion about the nature of Jesus' union with the Father
 - we profess our acceptance of its teaching every time we proclaim the Nicene creed at Mass
 - even though Jesus' relationship with the Father and the Spirit was clarified, it is ultimately a mystery
 - God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father

5. Jesus' words, "I am the way, the truth and the life" call to mind the wisdom of ancient Israel
 - basically, right manner of living will result in happiness
 - you either choose the way of the wise, truth that leads to life
 - or the way of the wicked, which leads to death
 - Jesus states that he and the Father are one
 - from this perspective, it's easy to understand how Jesus would say he is the way that leads to the Father
 - Christians follow the teachings of Jesus, and that way of living will lead them to God

6. Unfortunately "no one comes to the Father except through me" has been the source of religious wars, discrimination and false judgment
 - sometimes it's divided us more than it's united us and this is nothing less than tragic
 - Vatican II in its decree on the relationship of the Church to non-Christian religions stated that the Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in other religions
 - it has a high regard for the manner of life, the conduct, and the teaching of other faiths, even when it differs from her own teaching
 - each can reflect a way of truth which enlightens all men and women
 - all Christians should give witness by their way of life and should also acknowledge and encourage spiritual and moral truths that are found in others
 - as one author put it, "we must not seek to be the best in the world, but the best FOR the world"

7. Unity in diversity is challenging
 - we see it reflected in the first reading today when a conflict between Greek and Jewish Christians was resolved in a way that was acceptable to the whole community
 - it was an ethnic difference which created the challenge
 - diversity is unavoidable, and sometimes the best way of resolving difference is to have a reverence for the other

8. Jesus said there are many dwelling places in the Father's house
 - since it is God's house, and not ours, we have no right to presume that some will be admitted and others will not
 - this is in God's hands
 - what we must do is follow Jesus, exemplify his life, and continue to understand the teachings he left and the impact for our lives, and our world, today