

# Homily for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

May 9-10, 2020

Readings: Acts 6:1-17; 1 Peter 2:4-9 and or John 14: 1-12

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It seems like a safe bet to say that those of us who read the reflections posted here are “Church nerds.” So many of us are probably familiar with the little ache that develops in our hearts on Sundays because we can’t be physically present with our communities of faith to reflect on God’s word and celebrate the Eucharist. Of course we know in our heads that church isn’t ultimately a place, but rather a community of believers. Yet it can be hard to feel that in our hearts these days when we long to sing Easter Alleluias with scores of other voices joining our own as sunlight streams through stained glass windows and the scent of Easter lilies wafts toward us from a beautifully decorated sanctuary.

As we approach our eighth Sunday without being able to gather together around the altar, it’s a good reminder, and maybe even a source of empowerment, to hear the words in First Peter, “let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.” It affirms that indeed *we* are the church and that God dwells in and with us wherever we are.

But if your house is anything like mine, it doesn’t always feel very spiritual. How many of us moms know exactly what Jesus must have been thinking and feeling when Philip and Thomas asked ridiculous questions in today’s Gospel. He had been working so hard to teach them and guide them, and they just didn’t get it. (Especially on Mother’s Day, it’s nice to know that Jesus was exasperated too as he basically replied, “*How can you even ask that?!*” Hang in there, moms, even Jesus had tough moments!)

During these trying weeks of new routines, isolation, and anxiety how can we become the living stones that build a spiritual house?

Maybe the first reading can help us answer that. We see that the Apostles are devoting themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. Those are their gifts.

That is their call, and they're becoming living stones by being faithful to it. Similarly today, health care workers are courageously treating those facing illness. Teachers continue to connect with their students as they offer online instruction. Moms and dads are leading family walks and facilitating craft projects. Essential employees are keeping things going as best as they are able amidst many challenges. And it seems like everybody with a sewing machine is making masks by the dozen to keep friends and strangers alike safe in public spaces.

But the main event in that passage from Acts is that the Apostles appointed seven others to attend to the needs they were not able to meet. Here's another source of comfort—even the Apostles couldn't do it all. No one can. We don't need to do it all in order to become living stones building a spiritual house. In the face of the overwhelming tasks at hand, we, like the Apostles, should continue to do what we can and then reach out to others to help with what we cannot. It's not taking advantage to say yes to the friend who offered to get some groceries for you in order to minimize your exposure and keep a vulnerable family member safe. It's not selfish to ask your child's grandparents to read a book to them on FaceTime so you can have 10 minutes to recharge. It's not lazy to gratefully accept your neighbor's generosity in mowing your lawn.

Rather, this is the reality of the Eucharist—we humbly receive an unmerited gift so that we can be nourished to live out our unique call to bring God's love to the world. In these weeks when we cannot receive the Eucharist, let's be the Eucharist. As we embrace this pattern of giving and receiving—all with a spirit of thanksgiving - we are indeed made into living stones that can be built into a spiritual house. And that house can be full of Easter Alleluias— even if they're sung in pajamas on the couch.