

St Pius & St Anthony Homily 6th Sunday Easter Year C

Everyone needs a little sanctuary! Doesn't it seem instinctive or innate to our human nature that we always want to create 'safe spaces' or retreat spots around us. This tendency is most apparent or we more easily admitted it back when we were little. I remember as a kid, all the time creating 'clubhouses' or 'forts' to play in. We kids were always on the lookout for great niches, or cubbyholes around the house or yards that could become our special 'get away' rooms. We kids could turn anything into our 'castles' (think of playing in snow and building igloos or even raking leaves and trying to make tunnels in them! But most of the time it was on rainy days that we would move furniture around, and use blankets, and sheets to make our own version of tents or build a clubhouse. Overall, mom put up with us doing it, usually until we started gutting the closets: she drew a line on our building projects when she noticed the hallway filling up with everyone's boots, shoes, the vacuum cleaners and attachments and everything else that was loose on the closet floor. We dragged it all out into the hall, because we converted the closet into our 'office'. It was conveniently already wired with electric lighting! If we weren't hearing her commands to clean it up and put things back where they go, usually a subtle word from her about spiders in the dark crevices in there were enough to change our minds about how good a place it was! But we also had a wonderful attic area in the two story garage, that was wonderful for us to explore and take refuge in. But it had its own risk because you had to access it through the steepest set of stairs attached to the back most wall. Since it was against the wall, you had to push through the second floor through a hinged trap door pushed up, but no way to secure it, so at least once to all of us it crashed down on your head usually when you were trying to carry something up or down from there. So your sign of membership in the club was the knot on top of your scalp, the result of a kind of initiation ceremony to get in! But we always kept coming back!

Do we ever grow out of our 'clubhouse' making? What about today's adult 'man caves' or 'she sheds' (I heard a new one this week, a 'girl grotto or ladies lair)? But how about even our 'outside living rooms' that we used to call 'porches', gardens, groves or treehouses? I guess it is just in us, that we have such a 'nesting' instinct. *Here's a funny thing: Don't they say we finally grow up when we start hearing ourselves say things to others that our parents told us. When we cluttered that hall to make our hideaway, she would say, "Now move along, go move your game outside and clean this up". Well, I want to say that to our bird colony out here along the*

side of church. The building is about 100 foot long, and it is strange that the bird company make sit nest right above the side entrance door. Not a problem by itself, until they want to go dumping their plumbing sewage down below on the walkway inside! I say to them, "Move this along to the woods!"

So we all build sanctuaries. We need sanctuaries! And our gospel indicates that even God want to build a sanctuary of His presence, where? But most wonderfully within each one of us! Jesus says today that 'whoever loves Him and keeps His Word', that He & the Father will Spirit in to us and live there. God wants to make of us (our bodies) a dwelling place of His own. Don't we want God to live within us! He will set up shop, & create a sanctuary within us to dwell always among us. How wonderful! But it starts when we love Him, invite Him to us, and hold close His word within. Then God Himself will make a room within us to live-like here in our heart! And we find many scripture references to this 'divine sheltering' within us. For example, John chapter 1:14 has John tells us that the divine 'Word took flesh and dwelt among us'. The expected Messianic prophecies from the Old Testament include Isaiah's list of titles for Christ, one of which was the name 'Emmanuel' (Is 7:14) which means 'God-With-Us'. But that is Jesus who comes to us wherever we are, to keep us close to Himself. I can also think of His description of Himself in John 10 as our Good Shepherd who lays down his life for His sheep. I understand that laying down, to mean also that he lives with His Sheep (like those first shepherd who received the good news on Christmas eve, the scripture said they were sleeping in the fields alongside their sheep (Luke 2)- Or how about King David, another good shepherd, who stayed out in the fields such as we see when Samuel shows up to anoint the next king, and David's not there but was out working/living among sheep (1 Samuel 16:11-12)! Or how about the places in scripture like the Zacchaeus story of Luke 19:1-10, where Jesus announces, 'This day I'm coming **to stay at your house**'. And even on the road to Emmaus with the two disciples, Jesus was so desirous to enter and stay with them; so much so that Jesus settles right into their home, sets the table and provides the heavenly meal bread of Himself for them (Luke 24). We can see this divine dwelling place being set up within the shelter of our own bodies (in our hearts-souls) beginning when we are baptized into the life of God, 'in the Name of the Father, Son & holy Spirit' according to Matthew 28:19. Of course, the word baptism means to be immersed in or 'enter into'. St Paul gets a little more descriptive and draws us a picture of God living with us, as he tells us in (1 Cor

3:16, & 1 Cor 6:19), 'You are **Temples** of the Holy Spirit'. So here He is! God is no farther from us than right here-in our very own breath, our very own souls.

This nearness of God is what makes the next part of today's gospel so consoling. Jesus brings us a "peace the world or nothing else can give or take from us'. Talk about Sanctuary! What a comfort to know God has a space within us if we cultivate it for Him. This is Christ's own peace so close to us. To impress how awesome a gift this is for us, we simply need to consider the serenity and security Jesus had as He peacefully accepted the cross and walked through his suffering all out of love for us. All of that, can be ours too, if we '1) love him, 2) hold His word within us and 3) keep open that place within us for Him to dwell!'