

[Readings: Acts 6:1-7; Psalm 33; 1 Peter 2:4-9; John 14:1-12]

Growing up in the Zukowski family, there were two sources of wisdom and knowledge: Dad and Mom. As the years go on, the memory dims, but it seems that whenever we asked Mom a question about faith or life, she always had an answer for us. Maybe not the most theological, but always the most practical. Whenever we asked Dad a question, sometimes, once in a while HIS response was: “Go ask your mother!”

We all want answers, and it would be great if things were spelled out for us. But that isn't very often how it goes.

Today's Readings provide us with initial answers to some of these questions.

In our First Reading, we see that in the first decades of the Early Church, as the early Christian community grew, various needs and even conflicts sometimes called for a redefinition and restructuring of ministries. This is how we received the ministry of Deacons in the Church because of this adaptation to cultural needs, “The word of God continued to spread, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly;” I chuckle every time I read the next line, “Even a large number of priests were becoming obedient to the faith.” Isn't it great to have priests who are obedient to the faith?!”

The Good News is that the possibility is there for us to become “living stones,” as St. Peter says in today's Second Reading. “Let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Here is a remarkable invitation to come to Jesus as “a living stone.”

Nothing is less animate than a rock. But think like Michelangelo and realize that a stone contains a world of possibilities. The stone carver has a bag full of tools to chisel this rock to fit precisely into the space in a wall where it can be most useful. Each stone builds on the integrity of the whole until a building arises in which it plays a crucial supportive part. The humble stone is a single note in a Bach concerto. It is an incidental character in a Broadway cast. It is one sentence in *David Copperfield*. But put all the notes together, all the actors, all the sentences, and you have a masterpiece. This is the organic and vital house that faith built, and we don't have the Body of Christ without it.

However healthy or dysfunctional life has been or is, whatever blessings or mistakes have happened, they become the brick and mortar that form the foundation of our lives and become part of the living Kingdom of God already here on earth.

We are chosen, royal, priestly, and holy. These are the attributes of the stones that comprise the Church. We aren't part of this story by accident. Each one of us in this assembly has been chosen to be here, invited to the house of faith in some way. Many of us were invited first by our parents, who saw to our Baptism and religious education. Later, other mentors in the faith arose who shepherded us to the point of religious understanding and the moral formation we now enjoy. Perhaps now we ourselves are issuing the invitation to family, friends, and community by our own example of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Our Gospel shows us the process of finding answers to our questions about life and about faith. We are presented with some of the most moving, inspiring words of John's Gospel. I have turned to these words in some of the darker days and moments of my own life.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God, have faith also in me.” “I am going to prepare a place for you.”

Have you heard this story before? Some folks think that the more good they do on earth, the bigger their mansion will be in Heaven. A wealthy man dies and stands at the Pearly Gates in Heaven. St. Peter lets him in and together, they stroll through the golden paved streets of Heaven. Accustomed to the more fashionable neighborhoods while on earth, he is surprised that they go from the mansions, to the mid-sized homes, to the modest homes and eventually to simple wooden shacks. St. Peter points to one of the shacks and says, “Here is your eternal home.” The rich man asks, “Why is my home so small?” St. Peter answers, “Because your eternal home is built only of the good deeds you did on earth that are sent up here to Heaven.”

I like a better interpretation of our eternal home. While we are still on earth, we are challenged to become perfected in the love of God. If we get to Heaven, the perfecting love we shared on earth becomes the perfected love of eternal life with God in Heaven. So everyone’s mansion is of equal size! That makes more sense to me!

The answers to our questions while we are still on earth are revealed when Jesus Christ tells us in today’s Gospel that this life isn’t all that there is. That our priorities point to Heaven and to eternity, and not simply to human existence on earth.

Both Thomas and Philip need more information to process this. Their questions are not those of doubt and uncertainty. They are pleas for a deeper understanding that will lead to a deeper faith. Jesus Christ IS “the way, and the truth and the life.” Jesus and His Father ARE one, along with that sometimes elusive Holy Spirit. The answer to all of our deepest

questions are answered in faith and in works. In words and in actions. So ask yourself these questions and reflect on them this week:

- What questions about our faith, and the way things are, trouble you the most?
- What definition of who Jesus is makes the most sense to you?
- Do you feel chosen and precious in the sight of God, as Saint Paul describes?
- In what ways do we do the works that Jesus did? What more can/should we do?

Now, go, and ask your mother – your Holy Mother, the Church!
ALLELUIA and AMEN!