

## Homily St Pius St Anthony 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Easter Year A John 14:1-12

Haven't the birds been busy? About a month ago, they got busy in their annual ritual of 'homemaking' or 'nestbuilding', and I must make a confession. Not intentionally, but I have angered some birds recently. And a note to self, to make sure that I trim the bushes in the dead of winter next year, instead of spring, as some birds came home recently to discover their roofs or porch shade cut off – but honestly I didn't see their nest until I had already lopped off the branches above it! But you know how they are, quickly recovering and moving on to make a nest under the nearby eave-on a gutter spout. They are blessed to have those built in blueprints and instinct energy, to never give up creating new homes so adaptively! And don't we also have such a 'homing' instinct too. Every child exhibits that desire to build a dwelling – I bet we all at some point or other, made a clubhouse out of a closet, a hideaway behind or under furniture, a fort out of couch cushions, or built up from empty boxes. How many houses were made when I was little from a deck of cards, or Lincoln Logs, Tinker Toys or even popsicle sticks?

Well, we hear in today's gospel that Jesus is the best of all at 'homing' (*later in John 14:23 we read Him say, "We will come make a home in you"*), too. The homemaker, Of course, He is a carpenter! But with Jesus here, He is speaking of eternal dwellings or our true 'forever homes'. He goes & prepares it (Jn 14:3)! He is the WAY HOME for us – our Way to Peace! He says in Jn 14:1, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." He will repeat that line again in verse 27, about not letting our hearts be troubled, and then add, "Peace I leave...my peace I give to you." That is what we are after and what we work our lives building to get!

Concerned counselors, therapists or life coaches often inquire of their clients, "*Where are you – tell me about your mind, your heart. Are you in a good place?*" By that, they mean is the person coping well, situated okay in their life and thriving. They are asking if we are at peace, settled & content with God, with others, with ourselves and with our circumstances. Are we okay? For the time being at least- because this is where I love how Jesus says that "He is the Way' (that's a transitional-processional word– maybe we are not *THERE*, for who has perfectly *arrived*, but we are getting *along* and moving with Him. I love a quote of St Catherine of Siena who reminds us that "All the way to heaven is Heaven". Jesus wants to home with us – so He goes ahead, then comes back to bring us along.

There is a wonderful connection here -between Jesus' going ahead and then coming back for us– to last Sunday's Good Shepherd reading (Jn 10)

where we heard about Jesus ‘leading us by name – walking us *in and out* of the sheepfold pen, us coming and going with Him’ (John 10:3,9)

And Jesus takes that a little farther (along the path, of course) today when he lets us know that, He goes ahead “to prepare a place” for us and then comes back to take us with Him to our *‘good place’ together*. That is our heart-soul’s good space. He refers to it as “The Father’s House” (Jn 14:2). And it has many ‘rooms’ or “dwelling places”. I always emphasize that that means many spaces for many faces – that each child of God is uniquely loved and made room for - but it doesn’t mean that we are privately pigeon-holed separately. No, it means that we are corporately communed with one another. The Father’s House is open and ever-expansive, about everyone belonging, as a unity, each person having a role or part in the whole to play. “Father’s House” has more to do with *who you are with*, ‘all of ours-Father’, rather than exactly *where you are*. We all belong with our heavenly Father, together, wherever it may be (that’s the Way part again).

This good place, that counselors try to get us in, is what Jesus leads us into - the Father’s house. And it is not so much to be thought of as physical geo-location, but as a horizon or directional posture or frame of heart, a mind-set, a way of being. Above all, it is a way of relating most healthily! A building place of acceptance, belonging, contentment and serenity.

So how do we get our souls there, to that good place of Jesus intends? I hear Jesus say it’s all about R & R. **Resilience** and **Relationships** (yes the other R&R too) But the Way of Jesus naturally evokes relationships and resilience – that is Jesus Himself. How much more **resilient** do you get than resurrection – or as He says it ‘coming back’ in Jn 14:3 “if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again”? What a comfort – a come-back to, and redemption (think of it as a reset). And in that same verse He adds the next comfort which is **durable relationships** because Jesus says in that same verse Jn 14:3 “I come back to **take you to myself**, so that where I am you also may be.” He wants to be with us, and that is relationship. And he wants us to want to be with Him. That is getting us to the ‘good place’ -- Desiring relationship with Jesus, and our coming back to Him.

This passage of Jn 14:2-3, is right up there in my personal top ten list of most comforting Jesus passages. It’s right alongside, the next closest of Matthew 11:30 “Come to all who are weary and burdened: I will give you rest.” He gives us that place of rest, contentment and relief when we retreat with Him. We do have to clear, open the area in ourselves for Him, but He will come, and take us with Him to that ‘good place’ we all so desperately need.