



Sunday, May 10, 2020

Homily for the Fifth Sunday of Easter | Year A | Mother's Day

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Acts 7:55-60 / 1 Peter 2:2-10 / John 14:1-14 / Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Hello! It's so good to be able to reach out and share this short reflection today; even though our current circumstance keep us physically distant, I am delighted that we can still come together to share in the richness of God's word today, and on Mother's Day a day that can be deeply textured for many. It can be a day full of happiness, thanksgiving and joy, yet also may bring grief, pain or absence.

Wherever this day finds you, I am so glad you are here. Thank you.

I'd like to start by telling you a story from about twenty years ago when I started going back to church. When I went back, I began attending for the first time an Episcopal Church. Perhaps even like some of you now who are able to attend new churches, or the Episcopal Church, in this new, virtual way.

One day I was at church. I had gotten to know a few folks, and a church member came up to me and asked if I'd been given a roof tile yet. In my head, admittedly, I was wondering why I would want a roof tile ... but I did not say this. This gentleman ... Barney ... had asked with an enthusiasm for roof tiles that I did not understand, so I figured best not to question his joy, preserve our new, good relationship, and respond with, "Why no, I don't have one yet!"

Good!" he said. "I think there's one in the undercroft. I'll go get it!" I did not know what sort of room this undercroft was. Again I was new to the Episcopal Church. I didn't know all the church words. So I let his undercroft-enthusiasm go, too.

He came back a bit later from what was the storage space under the church – the undercroft – still jolly. He handed me this tile – It's a piece of slate as it happens, and you can see here the two holes where it was attached to the roof. And Barney told me a story.



It turned out that a few years prior the church needed to do some repairs on the roof, and many of the tiles had to be removed. He described what was going on with the building. How the roof was affecting the worship space and a few of the little rooms. I learned how the folks there decided it was time to make the repair. They raised the money – to ‘raise the roof’. Dealing with the new challenges they found, as you always do in a repair, they worked through those, too. Then he described how exciting it was to get the roof up – and then, of course – for this faithful community to celebrate once they were finished.

I did not know such joy could be found in roof repair! But there was the proof in front of me. Barney still all aglow with the story even several years later. And me ... now with something I didn't know quite what to do with, but that I loved for the story that came with it.

In our story today in the Gospel – we meet the disciples. There in a room, away from others, with Jesus. The disciples are expressing, understandably, every texture of emotion possible in the unprecedented time *they* are living in.

They're not sure what to think or what they're supposed to feel. Jesus has been revealed to them; risen from the dead. It's a story they are troubled to believe and can't begin to understand. They failed to recognize him earlier amongst them; they were scared, afraid, and concerned – rightly – for their lives – and went essentially into lockdown. They didn't understand or comprehend how any of the life they now saw before them was even possible. Jesus was there very much alive, with them in that room, and now – again – calling them further into a new relationship. Into a new normal.

Jesus tells them, in that new normal, “Don't be worried, don't let your hearts be heavy with trouble. Believe in me, believe in God – who has many, many rooms for you and for everyone in God's Kingdom.”

That's a story, an enthusiasm, right now that I and my textured emotions have trouble to understand. I am worried with what's now. With what's next. And I struggle to feel like I have many rooms to move into – in my life – in my home – with this new normal of quarantine and lockdown.

Jesus calls us, though, just like he called the disciples, now into new life. Into new normal – through the water of baptism and him, in body and blood – with us in the room.

In this unprecedented time of pandemic where we are living, restricted to so few rooms – it feels almost impossible to pivot toward the call – to move forward, and deeper into the *room*-i-ness of God's Kingdom.

God calls on us not to be worried, though, and to ‘wonder’ in God's works – the work of a God so full of wonder that rooms – ones we know exist and ones that could be new to us – are here for us to journey into.

Rooms like this – when we can explore God’s creation. Rooms in God’s Kingdom where we continue to feed others through outside food pantries. Rooms of virtual worship and prayer. Rooms where our new normal allows time to consider afresh strategies to fight economic disparity, where we meet education inequality in new ways - and are challenged to create new path of teaching. Rooms where our medical community explores new ways to heal and to give hope. Rooms where we are required to find new ways to comfort and sooth.

Our own rooms – perhaps we haven’t visited recently or are new – of our grief, heartache, despair.

All of these rooms where God is – and where Jesus is calling us to meet him.

This piece of stone has moved from room to room to room, as I’ve moved from apartment to apartment, house to house since that day outside in the churchyard with Barney, his joy, and his story. Just last year, as I said out loud that I didn’t know what to do with this thing, we decided – so unexpectedly – to put it in the middle of our supper table. So there it sits now, in yet another room, but now with a new call.

We put our bread on it. It often sits on the table between a pitcher of water and some wine. When we have friends over we share the story of how this rock was once on the roof of a church, absorbing the sunlight and weathering storms. We talk about Barney, his joy, and his invitation for me to move deeper into the story of our faith community ... to understand the space of that church, the room of God – the ‘room’-iness of God – s it offers.

So for all the Barneys out there, you keep inviting people into your stories, even though folks like me may not quite understand them at the moment. And for all of us – believe the story, and accept the call and invitation to move deeper into the room with God ... where your heart’s troubles, and your grief, and your pain, and your fear, and your love, and you enthusiasm, and your raise-the-roof joy is welcome – through the water of baptism and through the body and blood of our risen Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen.