5th Sunday of Easter S. Kathleen Osbelt

May 18, 2014 All Saints Church, Syr., NY

Jesus: The Way, The Truth, The Life

We all, in this church anyway, have a place that we call home. But the truth is, not one of us has a permanent home in this world. Our physical home is not our permanent home. It is not lasting. We are all pilgrims, vagrants, people on the way.

Jesus never had a home. He wasn’t even born in one. He stayed in friends’ houses, in Capernaum, Bethany, Canaan.

Last weekend the Sisters of my community had a farewell Mass because we are moving from the campus we knew as home for 150 years. But with God’s grace we are able to say no building is our permanent home. The only home we must be concerned about is the spiritual home within.

Jesus, in this final farewell to the disciples, tells them, and us, not to be afraid. He will be leaving the disciples as they knew him, but will be sending the Spirit to show them how to get to this place he is preparing for us. Jesus speaks of a large house with many rooms. The whole of humanity would be able to live in it. Everyone would feel at home

Eating their food: potatoes, rice and beans, ugali

Drinking their kind of drink: milk, wine, pombe

Listening to their own music: rock, classical, soul

Dancing the own dance: waltz, rock n’roll, buyu

Speaking their own language: English, Spanish, Swahili

Singing their own songs, yes, always singing.

All that in the same house – in the house of God.

This house is the end of all destinies, cultures, countries, brought together in one big banquet. Brought to the most accepting, loving, joyful experience ever.

Who wants to go there? Who in this church wants to be in that mansion?

Raise your hand if you want to go there.

Jesus says to each of us: You can go there. You know the way!

Thomas, who is actually all of us in the Gospels, speaks for us and says: “Lord, we don’t know where you are heading, how can we know the way?”

We are all heading to that glory Jesus speaks of, to the place of perfect unity, no divisions, no injustices, no violence, no prejudice… only love.

As for knowing the way? Jesus responds: “I AM the way.”

In other words, “follow me,”

“Do what you see me do.” Author Robert Fulgrum says: “Don’t worry that children never listen to you, worry that they are always watching you.” Showing children how to live is more effective than telling them how to live. Jesus passed on to us the life of love: love your enemies, do good for one another, forgive, do not look with distain upon anyone. Take care of each other, even the stranger. How can we not know the way?

The first reading today shows us that the early followers weren’t perfect either. There was so much racism and prejudice among them that the Greek widows weren’t getting the food that the Jewish widows received. So people who had a reputation of being wise and filled with the Spirit had to be chosen who would bring the whole community together and break through that prejudice. They followed the Way, the way of Jesus.

Our second reading today reminds us that we are chosen. Chosen to be what? To be living stones. Chosen to do what? To let ourselves be built into a spiritual house with Jesus as our cornerstone holding the whole thing together. Jesus is the truth. The truth, the truth of what it means to be human, to be connected, to be understanding of this truth: that we are all one. And when we act as one, we experience God.

Jesus is the Life, the one who shows us how to make life dignified, how to make life possible for all. Through Jesus all things have life. Life is a special, sacred gift, clothed in dignity if shines forth when we watch Jesus, listen to Jesus and follow Jesus.

That Vatican II theologian, Karl Rahner, wrote as a77 year old that his mother was a very saintly and holy example of Christian life without being aware of all the demanding implications of what it means to be a follower. He went on to say we can no longer become anymore the saint his mother (and our own mother) was. Because we know about the social relations in this world, we know how wealth and poverty relate to each other. We know about the possibilities of change, and that is why we have a task, a mission, and an obligation as never before. We cannot pretend we do not know what is happening, no more than those leaders of the Greek Widows could pretend, no more than the disciples could pretend, no more than Pope Francis could pretend. We know the Way.