

6 Easter – Year C – May 9, 2010
Acts 16:9-15; Psalm 67; Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5; John 14:23-29
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We just watched the movie *Up In The Air* starring George Clooney. While the brief synopsis on the DVD wrapper describes it as a comedy, I couldn't agree less. In fact, I found the whole movie very sad. Not just because the main topic of the story was firing people and dealing with their responses – I've seen that often enough from my own business experience. And not just because the greatest ambition of the movie's star was to achieve ten million flying miles, and get his name painted on the side of a plane. At least for me, the saddest part of this movie was the fact that this middle-aged man was largely estranged from the only family he had; and he seems to believe that periodic sexual encounters with a married woman equate to love and a meaningful relationship. He calls the cabin of an airplane or some hotel his home more often than not. Yet perhaps the most profound moment of truth is reflected, not in his fierce independence or his nomadic lifestyle, but in his own apartment – his home – which is austere, even barren, and perhaps mirrors who he really is as a person, with a limited capacity for love and true hospitality.

For most of us home is a kind of sanctuary, if not when we were children, at least as we grow up and make our own homes. It is a place where we can kick back, relax, be a little messy, drop any or all pretenses, and just be thoroughly – well – at home! Thinking back to our childhoods, we probably most associate home with our parents, siblings, perhaps grandparents, and even the family pet. It's Mother's Day today, when we honor all our mothers, step-moms, grandmothers, and Godmothers. Since this day of celebration was on my mind this week, I had a very vivid memory of a red wax-paper package in the kitchen of my childhood home. I also distinctly remember the advertising for the same product emblazoned on bright red delivery trucks. It was "Mother's Pride" sliced white bread. This was probably only a few years after Americans were introduced to "Wonder Bread" for the first time. All this before we were told that processed grains were really not the best for our health and well-being.

Jesus' care for the well-being of the disciples is also part of today's Gospel lesson. The reading from John introduces us to another person of the Godhead, the third person of the Holy Trinity. Jesus Himself is our bread of life and cup of salvation. He brings to the world the Word of God the Father in His very being as the incarnate Word, and in His actual words through his teaching and commandments. As Jesus prepares His disciples for His return to His heavenly home, He offers words of comfort, and the promise of the Holy Spirit. While Jesus has dwelt amongst us for a little while, He knows that His time on earth is coming to a close: the actions that will lead to His death are already underway. We are reminded in no uncertain terms that Judas Iscariot has already left the disciples under cover of darkness to complete his ill-conceived mission under Satan's influence. Yet the remaining disciples continue to question Jesus on where He is going, and how He will manifest Himself to the disciples, but not to the world.

There is no room for doubt in Jesus' response. The intentional decision for faith in Christ of His disciples – of you and of me – and our actions in keeping Jesus' word are tantamount to an open invitation to become a dwelling place for God. God makes His home in the lives and hearts of the faithful through the power of the Holy Spirit. Just as there are many dwelling places in the Father's house, not only does Jesus prepare a place for us in God, but he also makes a place for God to dwell in us. This is not something we are called to understand in a cool, intellectual way. The power of the indwelling Spirit is experienced only in faith. The work of the Holy Spirit is to continue the teaching begun by Jesus in His own lifetime. Elsewhere in Scripture, we hear about the other titles for the Holy Spirit: Comforter and Counselor, Advocate and Spirit of Truth. You and I are truly blessed to have God make His home with us. There is a wonderful poem by Margaret Halaska that offers some insight into

our own indecision, doubts and journey of faith. Some of you may have heard this poem before, but it is definitely worth hearing again. The poem is called *Covenant*. “God knocks at my door seeking a home for his son. / Rent is cheap, I say. / I don’t want to rent, I want to buy, says God. / I’m not sure I want to sell, but you [may] come in to look around. / I think I will, says God. / I might let you have a room or two. / I like it, says God. I’ll take the two. You might decide to give me more someday. I can wait, says God. / I’d like to give you more, but it’s a bit difficult. I need some space for me. / I know, says God, but I’ll wait. I like what I see. / Hmm, maybe I can let you have another room. I really don’t need that much. / Thanks, says God, I’ll take it.... / I’d like to give you the whole house but I’m not sure... / Think on it, says God. I wouldn’t put you out. Your house would be mine and my son would live in it. You’d have more space [than] you’d ever had before. / I don’t understand it at all. / I know, says God, but I can’t tell you about that. You’ll ... discover it for yourself ... if you let me have the whole house. / A bit risky, I say. / Yes, says God, but try me. / I’m not sure -- I’ll let you know. / I can wait, says God. I like what I see.”

What makes it possible for God to abide with us? The answer is love. Not some romantic idea, or the fleeting emotion most often driven by physical attraction, but the practice of love as a verb – in other words, faith in action. Love of Jesus is the foundation and motivation for our faithful obedience to God’s Word, and that itself is, according to Jesus’ own words, equal to loving God the Father. What is also essential to love is relationship. God is most eloquently characterized by relationship. The three persons of the Holy Trinity, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are perhaps best understood as the perfection of the eternal, co-equal, and dynamic union of lover, beloved and the love that they share. God desires that you and I also participate in this bond of love through our relationship with Jesus Christ, through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. If God the Father is characterized by love, provision and welcome, then in order to experience the fullness of God, we must meet and experience His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus, in turn invites us to participate in the community of love that is one with God – the Body of Christ. And the Holy Spirit dwells amongst us to comfort, guide, help and teach us. The Holy Spirit brings out the very best in us, as God desires. She reminds us Who Jesus is, and how we are to reveal Christ in what we do and say, and precisely who we are when we are at home with the Lord.

Where we choose to live is ultimately unimportant – be it a hotel room, or a more permanent home in a specific town or city. However, with Whom we choose to share our home is of eternal import. We are never left up in the air. God is always with us. We are grounded in prayer and all the spiritual disciplines. We do not have to be our mother’s pride and joy to be loved by God. We only need to accept the wonderful gift of life, and share in the living bread that is Christ’s body. God has sent the Holy Spirit in Christ’s name to dwell with us. The Holy Spirit abides in our hearts, so that we may always be in the intimate presence of God; so that we may always know God’s peace, irrespective of the chaos of the world around us; and so that we may live without fear. What a gracious gift of perfect love and hospitality. “Yes,” says God, “I like what I see”.

Amen.