

Sixth Sunday of Easter
Grace Church of West Feliciana Parish
Saint Francisville, LA
John 14:23-29

- We will come to them and make our home with them

- What is so special about being “home”?
- What makes home different from a house?
- If I were to go back to a place where I once lived, and find it full of unfamiliar people, different furniture and decorations - I might say, “this was once my home” - but not “I am home.”
- “Home” is not just the building, or the people and objects that reside therein.
- When I speak of “home,” I’m talking about a kind of relationship - to the place, people and things - and a way of being
-
- We say, “I am home”- but not, “I am house” - house it not something you can be - home is. As we say, “it is good to be home.”
- Home is a way of being - characterized by certain qualities - being untroubled, being at rest - home is where you kick off your shoes, lie back on the couch - leave the worries and concerns of the world behind - take a deep breath and relax
- Home is being with loved ones - people who know you intimately, from whom you have nothing to hide, nothing to prove - people around whom you can let down your guard, who care for you, who have your best interests at heart
 - It is hard when loved ones depart from us - when their home is no longer with us - the absence is felt - the lack of them is poignant - the awareness that something or someone is missing
 - That absence can change the way “home” feels for us - it is no longer what we’re used to - no longer familiar in the same way - or as comfortable - makes it hard to let someone go - hard to say goodbye
- Today’s gospel reading comes from a longer section of John, commonly called, “The Farewell Discourses”
- Jesus and his disciples are in the upper room, they’ve celebrated their Last Supper together, Jesus has washed his disciples feet, and now he is telling them that soon he will be leaving them - and where he is going, they cannot follow - he goes to prepare a place for them in his Father’s house
- This is upsetting to the disciples - who do not yet understand what is happening - who do not want to let him go - or to say goodbye.

- But Jesus encourages his disciples not to lose heart - promising that he will not leave them orphaned and alone - that his Father will send an Advocate, the Holy Spirit, in his name, who will teach them everything, and remind them of all that he has said.
 - Paraclete, the word translated as “Advocate,” is one who is “called alongside,” or one who “answers the call” - comforter, counselor, consoler and helper
 - A mother is a “paraclete” for her child when she answers the cry of her little one, holds and loves him or her.
 - Every time we look after a person in need and answer their cry, we become paracletes.
 - The Paraclete is given to those who are lonely and need the presence of a friend, to those who are lost and poor in spirit - and who cry out to God.
 - The Paraclete takes away the anguish of loneliness - brings presence, security, peace, and communion.¹
- In a sense, we might say, what the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, brings us - is home - our home - dwelling in the presence, security, peace and communion - of God - of the love and fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- The Holy Spirit brings us into that relationship - of the love and fellowship of God - and brings that relationship into us - God dwelling in us and we in him
- Just before our gospel for today, one of the disciples asked Jesus - “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?” And Jesus responds, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”
- The Lord will reveal himself - in a way that the world cannot see or understand - by making his home with those who love him
- Dwelling with them, and the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit
- One of the sure signs of God’s dwelling with us is the gift of peace -
 - “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.”
- The peace of the Lord - is not just a balance of forces of an absence of war and conflict
 - It is not just a good feeling inside of us - a feeling of centeredness, wholeness, stillness, or inner silence
 - It is not merely the absence of internal struggles and temptations
- No the peace which the Lord gives is more than that - transcends all these things
- Jesus tells his disciples that they will suffer - they will be persecuted - they will struggle -
- what he gives is peace in the midst of it all -

¹ Jean Vanier, Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John, 260

- a peace that passes understanding - that the world cannot give - peace that comes from the presence of God
- From the trust that Jesus is there - with us and in us.
- For Jesus *is* our peace.
- Peace is resting in him - having total trust in him. It is the peace of a child resting in the tender arms of her mother.
- It is a peace that comes from knowing that we have nothing to fear - God is with us - God has us - wrapped in his arms of love - and nothing, no powers or principalities - not even death - can separate us from his loving embrace
- That we will dwell with him forever - in his kingdom - in a new heaven and new earth - a new Jerusalem, where God is at home with mortals, and they with him
- Knowing that - trusting in God - despite everything the world may throw at us - is what gives us that peace and joy that passes understanding - that makes no sense to the world
- That we find in the Christian tribes of the Nuba mountains - who stay up all night signing hymns and dancing - praising God - in the midst of being severely persecuted - their homes and villages burned, grain stores destroyed - living in caves with no food or medicine - how is it that they have such joy -

-

**Our God, our help in ages past,
 Our hope for years to come,
 Our shelter from the stormy blast,
 And our eternal home.**