

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter - A  
Acts 6:1-7;  
I Peter 2:4-9;  
John 14:1-12  
Little Flower - 5/10/20

My Brothers and Sisters,

The parish staff and I want to wish all mothers a very happy and blessed Mother's Day.

Today's three readings offer us a biblical vision of church and parish. This vision has several elements.

First, St. Peter describes the church as a spiritual house. The cornerstone of this house is Jesus himself, *"the way and the truth and the life."* In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul would write that the household of God is *"built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets"* [2:20]. Alive in the Spirit of Jesus through our baptism, we are the living stones of this spiritual house.

Second, we are called to be *"a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."* The first spiritual sacrifice we offer is the Eucharist, Jesus' own sacrifice. However, we also join ourselves to Jesus' own sacrifice by pouring out our lives, our very selves, in loving service and charity to others. To be the church of Jesus Christ, we must celebrate Eucharist and serve the needs of others.

My brothers and sisters, as Peter wrote, *"[We] are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that [we] may announce the praises' of him who called [us] out of darkness into his wonderful light."*

In today's Gospel, we are reminded that in God's house there are many dwelling places, many mansions. The *Acts of Thomas the Apostle* is an ancient, non-biblical text. In one chapter, a king asked Thomas the Apostle to build him a palace. Thomas kept asking for and receiving money to build the palace, which he promptly gave to the poor and needy. One day the king went out to inspect his palace and found nothing there. He ordered Thomas arrested and put to the death. Sometime before, the king's brother had died. Before the king could execute Thomas, the king's brother appeared to the king in a dream and told him about the many mansions in heaven. On his tour of heaven, he had noticed one beautiful mansion that was still being built. When he asked to whom it belonged, he was told that it was the mansion being built for the king by Thomas the Apostle.

Today's first reading offers a practical insight into life in the early church. As the church began to grow, the Hellenists complained because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of bread. The Apostles did not feel it was right to take time away from preaching to handle food distribution. Therefore, they invited the community to choose seven men to handle this ministry. These seven became the first deacons of the church. The word *diakonia* is the Greek word for *service*. From all three readings today, it is clear that the church's ministries of charity are not extras in the life of the church or parish. They are as much the heart and soul of the church and parish as proclaiming the Gospel or celebrating Eucharist.

My brothers and sisters, in the domestic or house church, parents, especially mothers, embody the Gospel ideal of service in their love and care for their children. Yesterday was the 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of my mother's death. There was never any doubt in my mind or in my brother's mind that our mother put our needs and the needs of the family ahead of her own. In his book *Lead Like Jesus*, Ken Blanchard argues that leadership is about influencing others. His first example of leadership is "A mother with a child at any time of day." Mothers have tremendous influence on their children. Although none of our mothers were perfect, today is a day to be grateful to our mothers for helping us grow into the persons we are today, beginning with being grateful to them for their very first gift to us, the gift of life.