

*Readings*

Acts 6:1-7

Ps 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19

1 Pt 2:4-9

Jn 14:1-12

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Folks, among the beautiful truths of our Catholic faith treasured during the Easter season is St. Augustine's prayer: *Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.* In the Gospel today, Jesus tells us how this will be: *In my Father's house there are many dwelling places.* These words have always been very comforting especially at the death of a loved one. They remind me that my loved ones are welcomed into God's home where they will be cared for and my hope is to join them some day!

However, hearing Jesus speak so familiarly of my Father's house and then refer to the many dwelling places also reminds me of eternal life as the loving and joyful gathering of all God's people. Then, we recall the other references to eternal life such as Isaiah's *holy mountain* where there will be a feast of *rich food and choice wines*. There is the book of Revelation's image of a *new heavens and a new earth* and Hebrew's and Revelation's beautiful description of Jerusalem as a *heavenly city*. All these biblical images make it clear that the gathering of God's people in eternal life for which we have been created is not *boredom on a cloud*, but rather the vibrant fulfillment of Jesus' mission of gathering the peoples. It is a gathering that promises fullness of life, union with our Creator and Savior, community, joy, mutual love and care for one another.

This is what the Church, the Body of Christ is meant to be now! *God's dwelling* is also the Church – every Christian community is a dwelling place of God. And indeed, each disciple who believes in Christ is a part of God's Temple. This explains the beautiful passage in our first reading from Acts where the Apostles want both the praise of God and the care for widows to be attended to and honored.

The apostles, of course, are right. What unites us as members of the Church is not primarily an agreement on teachings or a philosophy of life. Rather it is taking to heart Jesus words: *I am the way*. Discipleship is apprenticeship: a person walks with Christ and is gradually formed “in accord with his master's” manner of life. So, following the way of Jesus includes a total gift of self, one that can even extend to the cross. Further on, Jesus says: *Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do*. Think of the way Jesus led the Samaritan woman to repentance and conversion, think of Jesus' parables of the prodigal son and the good shepherd or the healing of Jairus' daughter. The apostles did remember all that and their compassionate attention to the care of widows led them to turn to the disciples and say: *select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task*. So, when we say we love the Church, desiring to make her more present in our world as the Light of Christ among us, then we must be those “apprentices” of the Way of Jesus.

What does Jesus mean when he then says to his Apostles that *whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these*? One Catholic author puts it clearly: *He means exactly what he says*. They, too, will be instruments by which God works many miracles. They, too, will teach the eternal, saving truths of the Gospel. They, too, will suffer and sacrifice and die for their faith. They will give themselves up to others. So, the care for widows

is just the beginning. That is what Christ does, and that is what Christians do, because the Head and the Body are one; the vine and the branches are one. He tells us that *the works that I do, you will do* because he is talking to his own. St. Teresa of Avila knew this, she wrote:

*Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks with compassion on this world,  
yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.*

So, whether we are office worker, truck driver, medical worker, student or happily retired – our duty is the same: to gather with other disciples and follow the Way of Jesus – the Way of Truth and Life in compassion, service and sacrifice looking forward to sharing with them that dwelling place in God’s House.