

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.
As “Living stones”, we remember the fallen in the light of the Resurrection.
AMS Memorial Mass 2014



Tevye, the Russian Jewish protagonist of play *The Fiddler on the Roof*, obviously enjoys a familiar relationship with Almighty God. He is continually speaking to God the way one might speak to a friend. That was also the description of Moses and his relationship with Almighty God. We could say that these figures are at home with God who calls us to be the living stones that build the Church. When we appreciate those two concepts we can see the Father.

Home could be the central theme of this Sunday of Easter: Jesus goes to prepare us a place; the organization of home, the Church; and the construction of a spiritual house through a holy priesthood complete the concept.

Even the primitive community, fired by the experience of the physical presence of Jesus and then the immediate spark of the gift of the Holy Spirit, is still a work in progress. Despite those summaries about its exemplary life we read in the Acts of the Apostles, other episodes teach us that the same community was not composed only of saints, but also of those who limp toward the fullness of life. That reality gives us hope as we seek to perfect our response to the presence of the Risen Christ in our midst. We recognize the need for patient and daily collaboration, openness to the Spirit so as to use many gifts to build up the Body of Christ.

Even the first reading reveals a problem and a conflict in that primitive community between the Greek speakers and the Aramaic ones. So often in this country we have labored to accommodate believers from different ethnic traditions. The historic solution to the problem and the new ecclesial structures give evidence of work of Spirit. The Church is ever a living reality which grows continually. As Pope Francis reminded us on Thursday, “There is no such thing as a Christian without the Church, a Christian who walks alone, because Jesus inserted himself into the journey of His people.”¹

¹ Pope Francis, homily cited by Vatican Radio, 15.V.14.

Therefore in the excerpt from his baptismal homily which we heard in the second reading, Peter refers to our role in making a home for the Lord in our midst.

Each of us is called to accomplish the work of Christ modestly, but authentically in our lives. Therefore, our vocation is immense: we have a divine work to accomplish in union with Christ. "In our life-family, work, contacts with others, we must accomplish a divine task: gradually transform the world according to the Father's design with the help of our prayer and our union with Jesus in generous love."² Our normal activities are transformed through our union with Christ. Tevye's plain speech revealed an understanding of God's imminence. Peter calls all of this a priesthood. We are all called to draw close to Christ, the living stone. The Risen Christ is the stone rejected, which becomes the cornerstone.

We return easily to that image of a cornerstone and all the living stones that are us. Together we form a singular spiritual temple in which God lives. United with Him the believer becomes a cooperator of salvation. When we cooperate with God's life in us, we give an efficacious witness to an existence ripped from the darkness of sin and made splendid in the admirable light of Christ.

Is not what we do today another example of our mission as living stones? We gather to remember those who have perished in the service of our Country, the Veterans, and the chaplains who have died. Memory in the community of faith is not passive, merely a looking back, or turning the pages of a scrap book. It is a vibrant making present, as we do in our participation in the unique sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Our role as a community of faith is to continue to pray for those who sleep in death so that they might enjoy the fullness of life, to which we all aspire. We also want to offer consolation to those who lost loved ones in the tragic circumstances of war, which, although often inevitable, is always a defeat, a loss, and an unnecessary expenditure of precious resources, beginning with the lives of our young men and women.

To those here whose lives have been ever altered by the loss of a loved one, we, as members of a living community of faith, open the doors of home for those lost and those who mourn. We offer them space in the Heart of Christ pierced with a lance.

"Master, show us the Father" is Philip's wish. The Lord's response is "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." To know the Father is to contemplate Jesus. To see the Father, we must practice the works of Jesus, show that His face is ever alive and active in the Church. We come to this magnificent Basilica also to sustain our Christian lifestyle. We know that it is not always easy to live according to the word of God. We look for our Lady and our Lord to lead us on the way. We seek the example of the great saints so that we can be little saints ourselves.

As members of the Body of Christ we are challenged to reflect the light of Christ in every time and place. We must make His face shine for all people. Cardinal Bergoglio,

² Albert Vanhoye, *Le letture bibliche delle Domeniche*, Anno A, p. 128.

just before he was elected Holy Father, reminded the other Cardinals that the Church must reflect Christ, lest she be lost in herself.

Last Holy Thursday when I knelt to wash the feet of representatives in the chapel tent at Shindand Air Base in Afghanistan, I remembered that we are always called to bring Christ wherever we go. That is being a living stone. That is the imitation of the Divine Master to which we are all called.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled.” This afternoon we listen to Jesus’ Farewell Discourse at the Last Supper. The atmosphere is quite different from that here today. At the Last Supper the air was heavy with the betrayal of Judas and prediction of Peter’s denial, but also filled with affection in the face of an immediate departure.

If we really understand the goal of the Passion, we recognize it is the Father’s House. It is a preparation of a place and so can be read in terms of Jesus’ compassion on those He loves. If one’s gaze is fixed on heaven, it is possible to walk the path of the passion and death. The message about resurrection and the return of Jesus is clear and it is a message of hope. That is also our message today as we remember the fallen.

Christ is the way in as much as the truth—the complete Revelation of the Father—for which we have life. His love is gentle and He is generous. He does not count the cost of preparing a place for us. He is everything for us: the way, the truth, and the life. Love attracts us, but generous love makes us reflect, because it is costly. Today we reflect on that love in the patriotic service of so many.

Yet there is also the challenge of greater works. What can be greater than the mission of the Lord Jesus? Is it not rather the wider scope of the apostolic mission? Even that, however, is always done with the grace of the Resurrection—the Apostles and we, too, continue the works of the Savior.

In every aspect of our lives we are called to transform the world—families, work, society, community. We insert the Gospel there. This way we become living stones and realize the priestly character of our baptism. The whole life of a believer must be a spiritual offering to the Father, thus sacerdotal. These are daily actions, which become transformed because of our emotions and commitment.

Pope Benedict XVI once admonished: “Do not be fooled by those who see you as just another consumer in a market of undifferentiated possibilities, where choice itself becomes the good, novelty usurps beauty, and subjective experience displaces truth. Christ offers more! Indeed He offers everything! Only He who is the Truth can be the Way and hence also the Life.”³

Rather, “to believe is to commit oneself. It is not to understand rationally, it is rather to welcome, to extend credit, to meet the Lord and truly consider Him as the one who directs the threads of our life, and determines the development of every episode. Until we have this experience of communion, that is to abandon ourselves to the One who

³ Benedict XVI, 17.VII.08.

incorporated us to Him in baptism, we cannot say that we fully know Jesus and in Him, the Father. To do this we have been given the Holy Spirit. He makes it possible for us to walk on the path set by God, certain that He does all for our good.”⁴

That is one lesson that Tevye learned well. We are women and men of faith and we are consoled by Christ who tells us: “Do not let your hearts be troubled.”

⁴ Zevini and Cabra, *Lectio Divina*, 4, p. 250.