

In our Gospel today, Jesus tells us about the house of his Father, how he is going to prepare a place for each one of us. But we shouldn't think of this too literally. Now even though he was a carpenter, Jesus is not in heaven building each of us a dream house. But it's a way to express that God has room for everybody, that no one is excluded. Jesus came to save all people, to lead all people to a relationship with God. Jesus died for all people, not just a few. Jesus came to share his life and his love, to show us the way to God.

Being Christian means that we put this love into practice. We are called to be open to the other, to care for the sick, to welcome the stranger. It is not easy to do this. It's much easier to simply be with people we know, or people we have something in common with. Even the early Church in our first reading today had problems with this – they took care of people like them and didn't attend to the needs of the other.

Yet we are called to be responsible for each other, just as the early Church agreed to work together to support each other. We are called to be open to each other, to the stranger, just as Jesus was, to practice what he practiced, to love as he loved. Jesus said if you have seen me, you have seen the Father. What Jesus did, how Jesus treated people, is how God acts, is how God treats people. And when we imitate Jesus, we imitate God.

We are called not to exclude, but to be welcoming. Because we seek to imitate Jesus, we are called to be a church that is open to all, that invites all people to share in our prayer together. We are a church of saints and sinners. We are a chosen people, a holy nation as Peter tells us. Through the generosity of God, we have been chosen, and we are called to be generous to others. We are not called to keep this gift to ourselves, but to share it, to live out our baptismal calling to share the Good News.

In this time of physical distancing, it can be a challenge to see how we can support and welcome one another. Yet the Holy Spirit is opening new ways of being Church, of connecting and praying with one another. How is the Spirit calling me today? Perhaps to call a friend or relative who lives alone, to FaceTime your mom or grandmother, or to have a Zoom happy hour with your friends. Perhaps as well it can be to pray for those who are forgotten, who are marginalized, who will die alone today.

When we follow Jesus, we open our hearts to others. We welcome others as Jesus did. We recognize our own dignity and extend dignity and respect to others. We strive and struggle together to follow the way of Jesus. Let us continue forward together.