

Dear Friends,

In our Gospel for this Sunday the risen Jesus says to us:

*"In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I ever have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?"*

What a great image! In God's house there is a place Jesus has prepared for each of us, a place where we can all be together, a place where "All are Welcome."

Often when we read these words our thoughts go to that place beyond this life, to the afterlife, a beautiful thought indeed. Hearing or reading these words, though, we should not limit them to the afterlife. Jesus is also concerned with the here and now. During his years of public ministry Jesus went out of his way to prepare a place of welcome for all, especially for those for whom no one else would welcome. The plan of Jesus – a plan he entrusted to us, his followers - is one that makes a place of welcome for every variety of God's people. And this place of welcome for all, as our second reading relates, is built with living stones, making all who dwell in it:

*"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."*

As we celebrate our first Mass this weekend specifically for and with persons with special needs, their families and caregivers, I wish to extend a very warm welcome to all who are joining us. The parish's special needs ministry has the name *Everyone Belongs*, and everyone does belong here, has a place here if they desire; everyone is always welcome here. In this house that God has built there is a place for every person and every person's abilities. In this house that God has built *"all are named, their songs and visions heard and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words within the Word."* In this house that God has built, *"All Are Welcome."*

Peace and blessings,

Father John