

**WEEKLY SERMON - Fr Jim Nolan**  
**10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 - Fifth Sunday of Easter**

***John 14:1-14***

In the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Amen.

In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. I wonder what dwelling place means to you. It will not be the same for everyone because we are all individuals. We have our own definite needs and desires when it comes to where we live. As we have driven through Bridgeman Downs on a number of occasions, Fay has looked at the houses and commented that she would not like live in one of those and have to be the housekeeper or the cleaner. They are not everybody's cup of tea.

Back in the 1960s when I worked with Aboriginal people in North Queensland, I met a Government deputation. They asked me a number of questions. It was not long after the 1964 cyclone, and there were moves afoot to build houses for Aboriginal people on the two Mission Stations which were irreparably damaged. They asked me what sort of houses the Aboriginal people would like. I told them they would like tin sheds in which they could put their belongings, where they could shelter when it rained, but generally they like to live outside. They were not the sort of people that wanted to be separated from other members of the family at night by rooms in a 'normal' house. The response I got was 'you can't do that because it looks discriminatory'. Against those people's wishes, the Government went ahead and built three bedroomed European style houses. 30 years later in the 90s when Fay was running a Welfare Agency that provided housing for Aboriginal people, she was approached by the Government and was asked the same question – 'what sort of houses would the Aboriginal and Torres Islander people like' and she gave them the same answers as I had given 30 years earlier– a tin shed where they could keep their things, go inside when it rained and live basically outside. The reply she got from the Government was the same - 'we can't possibly build houses like that for Aboriginal people, because it will look so bad compared to what we do for European people.

Very interesting. No matter how much we ask questions or listen, at the end of the day we tend to make up our own minds and our judgements are usually on what we would prefer. The problem with three-bedroom houses for Aboriginal people is they do not like being separated from each other by rooms. They like to be together at night as they weren't terribly keen on the dark - not like the Islander people with their shipping - but they like to be able to look after each other and to be protected from things that might come against them in the dark.

Each one of us has our own desired house when it comes to the Kingdom of God. We have a little retirement house which, for us is quite heavenly. It is exactly what we wanted and took us quite a while to find, then some more time to get the price down to something we could afford. But finally, for us it is simply perfect. We love it, we love to live in it, and we certainly do not want to call any other place home. After all our moves and all our Rectories this is the one we really love.

Jesus, no doubt, was asked by the disciples 'please tell us about the Kingdom of God in terms that we can understand'. He had tried many times before. Many times in the Scriptures he tried to explain to them about the Kingdom of God, but ultimately the people were not 'getting it'. Finally they asked him to tell them in language they could picture and so he explained it in the terms of dwelling places, and finally they began to understand. As I said near the beginning, we all have different ideas about the perfect dwelling place. Some people love to live in mansions but some of the people I've met think that there is nothing to compare with the fishing shack near the water.

The way to the Kingdom is through the Father and when we arrive, we will find for us a dwelling place that will be totally perfect for us. When Jesus talked about the Kingdom, he was trying to explain to us that everyone had a place in the Kingdom where they could live and feel at home. It's very important for all of us to feel comfortable in the place that we are in.

How do we live our lives? Many of us think of death and what the Kingdom of God will be for us. Will we be worthy? Will we find our dwelling place in the Kingdom? Some of us would even admit to being afraid. What would happen if we weren't considered worthy? I don't know whether I can live in the same situation in the Kingdom as I can here on earth. Sister Julian, who died many years ago and was a member of the Community of the Holy Name, had a little saying 'Oh how wonderful to dwell with all the Saints in glory, but to dwell with some of them on earth is quite another story'. I often think of that and realise that all of us, from time to time, have difficulty living with the saints we find here on earth. Many people over the years have said to me 'you are a most unusual priest'. Well maybe I am, but I've come to realise that that is the calling God gave me. Jesus was an unusual Saviour. I hope that my being different is good for me and right for the people I meet, because each and every one of them has their own needs and own ideas about what the Kingdom is like.

As we go through life let us remember that Jesus commanded us to look after each other, to have a ministry of love, to allow people to come to us and to accept them as they are. It's a great temptation for all of us to try and make people the way we think they ought to be. I don't think that is ever going to work. Jesus spent most of his ministry in the countryside where he looked after people. He healed, He fed, He taught, He stayed with and He did so many things that helped them in their daily lives. I pray that you and I might be able to accept our part in the Kingdom right now and to be the people who Jesus wants us to be, because we are his representatives here on earth. We will find from time to time, Jesus wasn't always able to heal everybody. Compare the account of him visiting his home at Nazareth and how he was unable to help many people because of their unbelief. From now on let us live the life that we see and feel God calling us to, and in doing that Jesus has promised us a place in His Kingdom when we move from this life to the life to come. Amen