

Fifth Sunday of Easter A - What Is a Home? We are all longing for a place called home.
May 10, 2020.

Happy Mother's Day. During May as we celebrate the "Mother of God," we also celebrate all the mothers who are dear to us, both those who are still with us and those called to their eternal home. Mothers are often the "priests" of a child's first church, the family in which prayers are taught, stories of Jesus shared, and lifelong lessons of conscience began. They lead us physically and spiritually home even when we are lost. On this special day we voice the too often unsaid thanks which mothers are due. The gift of motherhood is the most precious gift that God himself bestows on those who answer this very special vocation. May Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ watch and bless all our mothers. Let us honour every mother not only today but every day. *Let us make every day – a Mother's Day.*

What is a home? When we think of the word or image or idea of a home, what comes to mind? Some may think of a building made with wood and plaster, or brick and mortar. Some may think of a shelter from the storm, a place of refuge, even though it may be just a cardboard box. I am sure we all agree it is a place where people build and share life together. A place where husbands and wives and families share the hopes and hurts, and the joys and sorrows of life. A place where we feel safe and full of love and care. Even now with the coronavirus pandemic, we're all told to stay home to be safe and also for the sake of our loved ones.

There is an old Chinese legend on "home": "**Three moves of Mother Meng**" (孟母三遷). **Meng Zi** (孟子, also known as Mencius) is a famous Confucius disciple. At three years old, his father died. He was raised by his mother. Meng was very playful when he was a child and liked to imitate. His family originally lived near the graveyard, he often played the game of tomb building and learned to cry. Meng's mom didn't like it and moved. They moved their home near the market slaughterhouse. Meng again played imitating others doing business and killing pigs. Mom felt such an environment was not good, and again moved her home close to a Confucius Academy. Meng, as before, learned what he observed and heard. He followed the officials who entered the Confucian Temple on the first and fifth day of each month and learned the etiquette of bowing and greeting each other. Mom was very happy. She thought that's where and what the child should learn and be brought up, so she stopped moving.

It happened to us too. After being hired by a consultant firm in Calgary in 1975, my first real engineering job in Canada, we started to look for a "home". With parent's help for the down payment, we managed to buy a single detached 800 sq ft house in a neighbourhood with a 15 minutes bus ride to office. For us from Hong Kong, 800 sq ft is a mansion! We settled in and our son was born the following year. Then one spring day in 1977, my wife told me "We need to move." when I was home from work. She was in the front lawn with our son and heard the neighbouring kids yelling four-letter words. So for the sake of our kid, we decided to move again and found a 1300 sq ft bungalow. It is close to a Catholic school and just 5 minutes walk to a new church that's going to be built.

Somehow, somehow, home has a special place in the human heart. It seems as though we are all longing for a place to call home. St. Augustine gave famous expression to this longing when he wrote of God, "**You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee.**" Somehow our restless hearts are always looking for a place to rest, a place to find true abiding peace, a place full of love, a place to call home. Maybe we feel like if only we had

the perfect job in the perfect community, then finally we wouldn't feel so restless. Maybe we feel like if we could meet that perfect someone, that perfect spouse, then finally we would be ready to settle down. Maybe we feel like if we can just get the kids through high school then, finally we can rest. And yet, even when we land our dream job, and find our soulmate, and raise our children, somehow the human heart is still restless, still looking for a place, to find true and genuine peace. Somehow, we are all still longing for a place to truly call our home. It seems like so much of our human experience can be summed up: **In the good times and the bad times, we are all longing for a place called home.**

In this Sunday's Gospel reading (John 14:1-14), we hear words that speak directly to our hearts longing for a home. Jesus says, "***Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places...And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may also be.***" Jesus is preparing his disciples for the time when he will no longer be with them in the flesh. They must have been brokenhearted. But Jesus assures them that even though their relationship is changing, it is not ending. Even though he will no longer be with them in the flesh, they will remain connected. Jesus is going to prepare a home for them in his Father's house, where they will remain united to him forever, "***so that where I am, there you may be also.***" As Christians, we see our life as a pilgrimage to the House of the Father - a journey home. There are many obstacles and narrow paths along the the road. But with persistent prayer, faith, hope and love trusting that God will give us guidance, encouragement and strength along the winding passages, we will find the Life, the Truth and the Way back to God. Our true home is with God, and Jesus. Our true home, ultimately, is not a place, but a relationship in the very heart of God, made possible by Christ, eternal in the heavens. Lord has made us for Himself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Him.

Let us pray for all mothers who lead us to the "Home". **Almighty and merciful God and most gracious Father, You gave us our mothers for the rearing of each new generation and the fulfillment of Your purposes on earth. You poured into their hearts the great grace of faith, love and sacrifice, and chose them to be instrument of Your holy and noble aims. On this day, dedicated to the honour of our mothers, we ask that You would bless all the mothers. Empower them to lovingly fulfill the obligations and vocation You have given them, as they look to the example of Mary, the Blessed Mother of Jesus, and to the lives of all devoted and holy women. We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God forever and ever. Amen.**