

This weekend we have three readings each worthy of a homily on their own.

The First Reading (Acts 6:1-7) describes the calling and the 'ordination' of the first deacons. It is a reminder of the particular vocation of deacons and also of the need to include the diaconate in our prayers for 'vocations'. There are five deacons currently in Lincoln and we pray for them and their families as well as praying for more vocations to the diaconate in the future.

The Second Reading (1 Peter 2:4-9) reminds us that all of us are called to be a royal priesthood, 'living stones making a spiritual house'. Jesus himself is the cornerstone and we must set ourselves close to him. When we see a brick wall then all the bricks look the same. However if you go for example into the Peak District in Derbyshire you will see stone walls where someone has skilfully put together different shaped stones to build up a wall. In the community of the Church we are all different, we are all unique, yet the Lord calls us to be together with him and with one another in this way building up the 'spiritual house' of the Church.

In the Gospel Reading (John 14:1-12) Jesus speaks to his disciples about the 'Father's house' in which there are many rooms. We hear this reading fairly often and we might ask ourselves what do we imagine those rooms to be like? Do we think of a big castle or hotel with lots of individual rooms where the residents are by themselves, perhaps being individually visited from time to time by Jesus or the Father, or do we have some sense of being together with others?

At the moment a number of people are living in isolation and have very little contact with others. Some may be fortunate enough to have a reasonably sized house and garden, others may literally have 'a room'. That room can be a 'holy place' of encounter with the Lord, but especially in the present circumstances it can also be a lonely place, a place that expresses our enforced physical separation from others.

Especially if we feel that separation and loneliness very strongly it is good to remind ourselves of the words that Jesus uses at the beginning of this gospel reading: 'Do not let your hearts be troubled, trust in God still and trust in me'. The words of the second reading teach us that we are not alone, but part of a spiritual house made up of many living stones, and that together with others we are called to sing the praises of God. One of the positive aspects of this situation is that we can sing our hearts out in prayer and praise without needing to be embarrassed by our lack of musical skills!

As I have done over the past few weeks I end with a reminder that we should keep in our prayers all those whose lives have been directly touched by the Coronavirus and especially those who provide the essential services that we all depend on not only at this time but throughout the year. Do please join me in saying the Rosary for their intentions on a Thursday evening at 7.30 prior to the public show of appreciation at 8 o'clock.