

Fifth Sunday of Easter

For it stands in scripture: “See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner.” (1 Pet 2:6-7)

Dear Friends:

The rural areas of my native New England are crisscrossed with stone walls, the centuries old remnants of the first farmers seeking to push aside pesky rocks that inundated their newly cleared fields. Biblically and to the Jews of Jesus’ day, rocks were a different matter. Our NT reading today mentions the word ‘stone’ or ‘rock’ no less than seven times in just five verses.

The Jews looked forward to the day when the Temple would be rebuilt on a suitable rock or cornerstone. Properly and securely constructed, then, it would be the suitable dwelling place on earth for God-self. The Jesus movement came to see and accept Jesus as the **son** (*ben*) of God and the **s-t-on-e** (*eben*) upon which God was erecting the new Jerusalem. [A nice play on words in the Hebrew there, and a corny attempt to reflect similarly in English!]

Recall, if you will, the thought that the materials for 1 Peter were set down by Peter in the 6th decade CE but not crafted into the letter we have today until the 9th decade—a time when Christians were spreading throughout the then-developed world a good distance from the Temple at Jerusalem. The literal cornerstone of the Temple would be fixed and immovable, but Jesus the spiritual cornerstone of the new Jerusalem dwelt wherever God’s people chose to live and dwell. Jesus is unconstrained not only as to location, but totally unfettered as to the human condition. He dwells with you, dear friends, and with me in good times—and in the midst of the virus.

Faithfully,
Fr. Reed+ (904)472-4119 cell

The Collect

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Collect for Relief from the Virus Contagion

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, graciously comfort your people amid the uncertainty facing us in the Coronavirus contagion: Mercifully attend to those who are sick, bless those who seek a vaccine and cure, bless our Church and civic leaders as they seek to guide us, and fill our hearts with confidence that, though at times we may be afraid, we may still put our trust in you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Concluding Collect: For the Election of a Rector

Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look graciously on your Church, and so guide the minds of those who shall choose a rector for this parish, that we may receive a faithful pastor, who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

First Reading—Acts 7:55-60

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he died.

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16 *In te, Domine, speravi*

- 1 In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame; *
deliver me in your righteousness.

- 2 Incline your ear to me; *
make haste to deliver me.

- 3 Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe,
for you are my crag and my stronghold; *
for the sake of your Name, lead me and guide me.

- 4 Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me, *
for you are my tower of strength.

- 5 Into your hands I commend my spirit, *
for you have redeemed me,
O Lord, O God of truth.

- 15 My times are in your hand; *
rescue me from the hand of my enemies,
and from those who persecute me.

- 16 Make your face to shine upon your servant, *
and in your loving-kindness save me."

Second Reading—1 Peter 2:2-10

Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the

very head of the corner,” and “A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Holy Gospel—John 14:1-14

Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”