

Easter 5A, 2011

Text: 1 Peter 2:2-10

Title: Another Brick in the Wall

+ INI +

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

Easter is a time for Baptism.

We've celebrated the rite of Baptism for Brooklyn, Briella, and Caiden, while at the same time remember our baptism, and learning from St. Peter what it means to be baptized.

Today, St. Peter gives us an unusual picture of what it means to be baptized.

In 1979 Pink Floyd's album "The Wall" came out. The best known single from this album was the protest song, "Another Brick in the Wall." The last line, which you probably know, is "All in all, you're just another brick in the wall."

For Pink Floyd, being a brick in a wall was a bad thing. It meant conformity, forcing people to be and look the same, to look identical and to fit together like so many bricks in a wall. They saw modern education as nothing more than stripping children of their individuality.

Today, St. Peter calls you a brick in the wall. But this is a good thing. This is meant to be something positive.

He says, "You yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house."

You are a brick in the wall, but not just any wall, a wall in the very house of God. On its own, a stone isn't good for much. It might be a paperweight or a doorstep, but that's about it.

But in the hands of a craftsman and when combined with other stones, that single stone can be a piece of something magnificent. It could be one piece of a pyramid, a skyscraper or a cathedral, or a family home.

Look around you at all the stones, all the bricks that have come together to build this church. Think, too, of all the people who have come and gone from this congregation.

You are a stone, a brick in the house of God. And not just a physical building, like this church, but a spiritual house.

God has chosen to dwell here on earth. In the Old Testament it was in the tabernacle and the temple. In the New Testament, God lived on earth in the person of Jesus Christ. And now God lives on earth through His church, His living, spiritual house.

The important thing about God's house, what made God's house special was the fact that God's Name was on it. Because God's Name was there, it was a house of prayer, where people used God's Name in prayer and praise.

When King Solomon dedicated the temple, he prayed, "May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day, this place of which you said, 'My Name shall be there,' so you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place."

The Temple was a place of prayer. God put His Name there so that the people who came there to pray would know that their prayers would be heard. Even if the people could not make it to the temple, as long as they faced the temple and prayed towards God, they knew that He would hear them.

When Daniel was in exile in Babylon, hundreds of miles from Jerusalem, he still prayed towards Jerusalem, three times a day, knowing that His prayers would be heard, because that is where God had put His name.

In Baptism, God has put His Name on you. You were baptized in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God has written His Name on your forehead with the water and the Word.

This is what makes you the temple of God, His spiritual house. Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, because God has placed His Name on you and dwells in you.

But you are not God's house on your own, but together with all the other baptized children of God. You all, together, are the one church, the one dwelling place of God on earth.

God has put His Name on you, God dwells with you for a reason. God gives you His Name for a reason. And that is to use it.

You are not to take God's Name in vain, that is, to curse, swear, use witchcraft, lie or deceive by His Name, but to call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks. This is why God has put His Name on you and made you His temple- to use that name for prayer and praise.

First of all, God gives you His Name so that you can call upon Him, to pray in any time of trouble.

This is what it means to be baptized, to be the church- to pray. We pray for our own needs and the needs of those who are known to us. We pray for the whole world, for our leaders, and for those who suffer.

Yes, you can and should pray on your own, but one reason why we come together each week is to pray together, to call upon God's name together as the church.

These are the spiritual sacrifices you are called to offer- prayers for the needs of the world. You are here not to sacrifice bulls or goats or sheep, but to offer prayers for the world.

You use God's Name not only to call upon in prayer, but also in praise and thanksgiving. Again, you can and should give thanks to God on your own, but you are here today to thank God and praise Him together.

St. Peter writes, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the praises 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."

God has made you His people in order that you may proclaim His praises.

God gave you His Name so that you may use it in praising and thanking Him for what He has done.

St. Peter lists three things that God has done for you, three reasons to praise Him.

First, God has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. You were lost in the darkness of sin and death. You were doomed to walk aimlessly lost forever. But God shined His light into your life, bringing you hope and comfort.

Second, He took you from not being a people to being His own people. Apart from God, you're just a bunch of individuals going your own way, doing your own thing. You're on your own to fend for yourself. When God saved you, He made you part of a community, a group of people.

Salvation is not just an individual- me and Jesus- kind of thing. When God saves you, He makes you part of a people. He joins you to all the others whom He has baptized. He fits you together with other bricks, so that together make up His house where He dwells.

Third, you have now received mercy. God saves you, He baptizes you not because you deserve it, not because you've earned it, but because He has mercy on you. You are not worthy to bear His Name. You are like a cracked, crumbling brick. But out of mercy, God takes you and shapes you and sets you into place.

In any brick wall, not all brick are equal. The foundation is the most important, and the cornerstone is the most important of all. All the other stones rest on the cornerstone and depend on it to be straight and level.

Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. The whole building depends on Him. God took Him, even though He was rejected and despised, and used Him as the cornerstone of His house. He supports the whole structure.

As a brick you rest on Jesus Christ, and all those who have gone before you, and you support all those who will come after you. God's still not done building His house, and there are more bricks to be laid.

In Baptism, God has made you a brick in His wall, a wall in His house, where He now dwells. He has put His name on you, making you His temple, to use that Name to pray and to declare His praises.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen.