

Last fall, I went on a business trip to Toronto. My company was generous to me concerning my accommodations. It was a first class trip, all-the-way.

However, my most recurrent memory of this trip was taking an evening stroll and seeing all of the homeless men and women that were almost invisible during the daylight. They were gathered together, wrapped in old rugs, a sheet of cardboard or worse, only the clothes on their backs to keep out the cold night air that comes too early at that latitude. Here I am, staying in a fine hotel, and there were people lying on top of grates to capture the steam heat released from the garbage and waste in the sewers below them. I felt ashamed, I felt humbled, I felt angry, but most of all I felt helpless. I knew that no matter what I could give anyone of these people that night, it wouldn't be enough.

And while this week's gospel resonates with words of hope, there is an unspoken pain as well. And whether John intended it or not, it is somehow fitting, I think, that, in these almost last words of his, Jesus addresses many of the deepest of all human longings: the need to feel like we belong, that we are needed and loved and that there is some place safe we can call home.

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For the disciples, both before and after Easter, this meant being with the one who made them feel most at home inside their own skins - Jesus. The one for whom they had left everything just to be with, so warm and winsome and full of life he had been for them, a human magnet, the like of which they had never experienced before and

would never know again. To be with him was to know the strongest and truest place they had ever experienced, a fortress of sanity in a dark and decidedly dangerous world.

In spite of everything that had happened along the way, everything they knew would happen or had happened to him, and maybe even everything they knew was going to happen to them as well, safety and solace was where **Jesus was because it was the place where they felt most fully themselves.**

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It is clear to me in today's Gospel that Jesus is trying to drive home something very important to his disciples. He knew they were afraid that their fate was going to be not much better than his. And so Jesus tries to give them hope.

In putting myself in the shoes of the first disciples, I imagine the scene played out like this:

Jesus says:

I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. I imagine he was met with blank stares as the apostles wondered what he was talking about, so Jesus tries to say it another way.

**In a little while the world will no longer see me,
but you will see me, because I live and you will live.
On that day you will realize that I am in my Father
and you are in me and I in you.**

What in the world is he talking about? And again Jesus speaks.

Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me.

The apostles must have said to themselves: O.K. that makes sense. But then Jesus continues:

And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him. Ok now, you lost us again, what do you mean reveal yourself to us??

And although it was not a part of the reading today, the next words of Jesus make a summation of what he is trying to get into their heads and hearts:

"Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we (meaning the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) will come to him and make our dwelling with him."

At last, the Apostles can get a grip on the message.

Home, security and true peace Jesus tells them, is where people do what I do, are what I am. Do **that** and you will be where I am and where God is.

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The illusion we live by is that some of us are home now; and by that I mean those of us with a two car garage and a big yard out in the

suburbs or a modest place out in "the sticks" somewhere, a place we can call our own, however luxurious or plain it may be.

The illusion that some of us have found where we belong and some of us have not. That there are the lucky ones and the unfortunate ones. The caregivers and the needy.

The ones who get to stay in expensive hotels and the ones who get to sleep in and eat from the dumpsters behind that hotel.

It is a comfortable illusion; for it allows those of us who are fortunate enough in a material sense to live in this world, feeling thankful that we don't have to live the way most of the world does. "There but for the grace of God go I."

It is a prayer of delusion.

For "homelessness" is not so-much "an issue" we should be concerned about. It is a reality we all must live. That is one of the stark realities of the gospels. We may choose to live the illusion that we can skip lunch to feed a hungry child. Cut a deal with God and ease our conscience. But the deep homelessness, the one that none of us ever escapes - none of us, is that until there is enough for everyone there is, quite simply, not enough, not enough to give any of us the truest sense of where we belong.

That is what Jesus means by "being where I am". That is what he means by "abiding in my love". There is no other way to do it unless we do it until there is room enough for everybody. Room enough in

our hearts, in our pockets, in our bank accounts, and in our national budgets so that no one needs to worry about where they are going to sleep at night, so that no one needs to wander from place to place just to find food.

The reality is that we will never know peace inside our own skins until there is peace and security for everyone not just for some.

Not as long as there is one person left on the outside.

Why? Because by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us in Baptism and Confirmation, The Advocate, the one the world cannot accept, *that is who we are*, a people who can never really be home, never truly be secure, until everyone is; for homelessness, loneliness, unwanted ness and loss are issues of human identity. When we finally learn what it means to do what Jesus did and become what Jesus was, then, THEN God will come to us and make his home with us.