

Thomas R. Cook  
St. Stephen's Church – Edina, Minnesota  
9:00 and 11:15 p.m. Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist  
The Fifth Sunday of Easter – May 14, 2017

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“Like a Loving Mother...”

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Scripture: John 14:1-14; 5 Easter A  
Note: Mother's Day

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My daughter, Candice, got her drivers license this week. Makes me think...

I suppose that along with the inevitable parental trepidation that comes with such a time, it calls at least for a little celebration as you watch your little one achieve those milestones that bring them pleasure and responsibility while reminding you that they are growing up... and you are growing older. I think back over all those years growing up under my mother's care, and I suppose that the eyes of experience allow me to see a little more clearly, because now I recognize that my mother wasn't only caring for me, but she was preparing me for something that neither of us ultimately could prevent. When I got my drivers license, it was just one more step toward the independence she knew she had to instill within me. When I drove away from my home by myself for the first time, the distance between us widened just a little, but the path toward my future grew a little closer. And that is the way of things. My mother cared for me by providing for my needs, then she cared for me by seeing that I could provide for myself, and then she cared for me by sending me out into the world to care for others. And after I had left my home to make my own way, she spent the

rest of her life making sure there was a welcome place for me whenever I should return to see her again.

So when I pondered this morning's reading from John's gospel, I couldn't help but think of those nature videos I used to watch way too often when I was younger where the mother bird realizes there isn't really any more that she can do for her brood, and the nest is getting crowded, so she pushes and nudges her fledglings right off the side of the nest, and they either fly or else they tumble to the ground. But either way, things change.

Funny how on Mother's Day, Jesus so reminds me of a caring mother. For years now Jesus has been with his apostles and friends. He has lived with them, taught them, challenged them, cared for them, argued with them, protected them, healed them, laughed with them, wept over them, and loved them. But something is changing. Time has moved along, and things are not going to continue as they have always been. He knows what is coming. Now think of those baby birds in the cozy nest. It can't stay like that forever. So Jesus tries gently to break it to them... *Listen, I'm going away. But don't be troubled or worried in your hearts. I'm actually going to make a new home for you, a forever home, with me and with the Father. We'll see each other again. Someday.* But the baby birds don't get it. *Where are you going? How can we find you? Show us this Father.* And I imagine that Jesus lovingly looks upon this little family and knows that they are as ready as they are ever going to be to take on the work of their master, their

friend, the one who has been like a caring mother to them. And I suspect Jesus knows that as long as he is around, they probably won't really ever do it. They will stay comfortably in the nest and let Jesus worry over what they need and what they know, and what they should do and what they should say, let him feed them and protect them and point to every step along the way. No, the time is come. And the disciples have to be put out of the nest in order that they can begin the work they are given to do: to build a ministry of love and healing and reconciliation as Jesus taught them. It's time they become the Church, the body of Christ.

But Jesus doesn't leave his disciples out in the cold. He doesn't push them out the nest and say, "Good riddance!" He reassures them. And he promises them that they will do even greater things than they have ever seen.

You know, we are result of that promise. Our church is the result of that promise. Although we hold Jesus to be the incarnation of God, the Creator of all that is, the author of life, even Jesus was bound to his place and time as long as he walked the face of the earth. His work to reveal the kingdom of God centered around him, his own life and words and teaching, as long as he was here in the flesh. But when the time came, and the disciples were pushed out of the nest, and they began to make their way in faith and trust in what Jesus had promised them, the ministry of Jesus was no longer bound to himself. Now he was free in the Spirit. And the disciples who

had never really left Galilee and Judea and Samaria found their way, ultimately, to, well... Edina. Now that *is* indeed a wonderful and marvelous work, beyond anything Jesus could have accomplished himself in an ordinary human lifetime.

But we are only human. Even though we know of the day when we, too, have left or must leave the nests in which we have been nurtured and comforted, don't we still long for such a place? I wouldn't choose anymore to live in my childhood home, but I continue to crave that sense of warmth and security and goodness that I felt there. And I know not everyone may have such an experience of home, but I imagine we all desire that sense of comfort, of belonging, of care and security. A place of our own with others we care for and who care for us. Even as Jesus pushes us out of our comfort zones, so that we, too, can be ministers to others in his name, he reveals how well he knows us: *"Do not let your hearts be troubled, people of St. Stephen's Church. 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."*