

## ***Ask Fr James***

### **In my Father's house there are many rooms... (John 14:2). Does this mean people will have different levels of rooms?**

This statement of Jesus has been a subject of discussion amongst theologians. Some think it refers to the Temple in Jerusalem because Jesus referred to the temple as "my father's house" in some texts. For instance, 'Did you not know that I would be in my Father's house?' (Luke 2:49) and "stop turning my father's house into a market place" (John 2:16). Still, many other Christians have interpreted this text to mean that Jesus was promising large air-conditioned rooms with saunas and hot-tub and even a mini-golf course in "heaven."

To understand John 14:2, we have to examine the etymology of the words Jesus used and the context. The Greek word he used for "house" is "OIKIA," and it means "residence...an abode." From the prayer, "Our Father" Matthew 6:9 we know that God is in heaven. The word "heaven" comes from the Greek word "OURANOS," and it means "the sky; by extension, heaven (as the abode of God) and by implication, a state of happiness and eternity." The context of the statement was Jesus teaching and preparing His disciples for their ongoing ministry after His death, resurrection and ascension. (John 14:1-14).

Jesus' comment, 'In my Father's house, there are many rooms and I go to prepare a place for you?', seems to suggest that, he goes to prepare a place of dwelling for us in the very real presence of God the Father, in some way, these many rooms in heaven are not prepared nor ready for occupancy yet. Jesus speaks of heaven as yet unprepared for believers because the price has not been paid, but once that sacrifice has been made on the cross; by his resurrection and ascension, heaven is indeed prepared and made ready for all believers. One theologian describes it in this way; 'The place to which Jesus refers already exists but it is not ready for his disciples to occupy. Jesus has to go and prepare it for them. Participating in the mystery of the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension will be all that is necessary to make heaven habitable for Jesus' disciples.

The preparing of a place, therefore, refers to the securing of relationship with the Father through his death and resurrection and his return to the Father, ascension. Christ prepares a means of access for us. By room, he does not mean suites but space in heaven. The use of the word "mansions" or "rooms" certainly denotes that we will be taken care of in fine fashion, "for at the resurrection from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven (Mark 12:25). But from this one passage, it cannot be said emphatically that we will all have private residences or exactly how cozy they will be like. This verse is simply stating that in heaven there are many dwelling places, and Jesus is preparing them for us.

***You may email/send your faith questions to Fr. James and he will answer them in our Sunday Bulletins.***