

It all comes back to the Upper Room.

In today's gospel from Luke, just as in last weeks from John, we are in the room where Jesus gathered his closest disciples on that Holy Thursday night.

It is shortly after the death of our Lord and those who were closest to Jesus, the true believers, were gathered behind locked doors in a state of total fear.

It would seem that being a follower of The Christ was not going to be as easy as it might have first appeared.

Two of the disciples have hurried back from Emmaus where they had encountered a man on the road and in the breaking of the bread; they came to realize that they had been talking with the Risen Jesus.

You sense their excitement as they hurry back to the Upper Room and greet the others, to share this unbelievable experience.

In the midst of this excited chatter, everything changes. Despite the doors and windows being locked out of fear of the religious authorities Jesus appears and greets them with the words- "Peace be with you."

Anything but peace descends on the group. In an instant, they move from excitement to outright panic as they were "frightened" by what they were experiencing.

Jesus seeing their terror sought to calm them down; he eats with them and with great patience, and love opens their eyes to the scriptures.

After reviewing all that he had taught, Jesus reminds them, he reminds us, that "[we] are witnesses of these things."

Jesus knows that they are not yet ready to leave the comfort of the Upper Room. He tells them to sit tight a bit longer and he will send the Spirit to be with them.

Jesus and the disciples know there will be a cost if they are to be witnesses to all the things they have seen. To be a witness, they must find the courage to leave the safety of the Upper Room.

They know the world will not embrace them. They will face being stoned or worse, and all risk being shunned by their families and friends as blasphemers.

It is reasonable to assume that for many of the disciples, at this meeting with the Risen Jesus in the Upper Room their preference would be to make no move at all.

They find themselves in what chess players call a [Zugzwang](#) dilemma. This happens when a player in the game would prefer to pass. It is when staying in place is the safest move of all. What makes it a dilemma is that not moving is not an option- you must move or forfeit the game.

To be a witness of all they had seen, the disciples had to leave the Upper Room. Making no move was not an option.

For many of them however, there is a sense of comfort in the Upper Room, the scene of their last supper with Christ. It is now the place he returns, resurrected from the dead and shares with them a meal of fish.

We come together here today in our parish home, our Upper Room. It too is comfortable and safe even if it is crowded at times. Many of us have chosen this mass to attend and follow the same routine week after week. Perhaps you have picked this mass for its music, for the community of friends who attend, and I know many have their favorite seats.

We come here to be fed by the word of God and the Eucharist.

St. Patrick's is as comfortable as the Upper Room was for the disciples.

There is nothing wrong with that, but it is not the whole story if we are to be witnesses of all we have seen.

St. Paul tells us in the second reading that we will come to know Jesus if we obey his commandments.

In a few short weeks, on the final Sunday of Easter in mid-May, we will read from John's Gospel when Jesus shares with us his greatest commandment:

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

How did Jesus love us? As witnesses of this love how are we called to go forth loving one another.

A partial list of things we have witnessed include:

- Jesus humbles himself to share in our humanity. He was born, lived a full life, suffered and died.
- Jesus washes the feet of the disciples, the work of a slave and then told us to go and do the same;
- Jesus did not stay in Nazareth. He left his home, gathered his disciples, and he ate with the tax collectors and the outcasts;
- Jesus accepted people and invited them to join him with the simplest of invitations. No long application form or pledges of allegiance, just the words- "Come follow me."
- Jesus was not afraid to reach down and touch the person with leprosy.
- Jesus said from the cross- Father forgive them for they know not what they do.

I could go on, but you get the idea.

I want to focus on one of these teachings we have witnessed as an example of the dilemma of Christianity. It is the teaching on forgiveness.

Many are here today in the comfort of the Upper Room that is St. Patrick's Church. Soon we will break the bread and share in the Eucharist. The communion hymn will be playing, and it will just feel right and good.

As you sit with your thoughts, you are moments from leaving this place to go out into the world.

Many of us arrived here holding on to very real hurts that someone has inflicted on us. These thoughts can become all-consuming. We are convinced that those that have hurt us so deeply are not worthy of our forgiveness.

This place of hurt may have even become our comfortable Upper Room.

What does Jesus ask us to do? It is a dilemma in many ways?

Here is a possible prayer for that time after we eat the bread or anytime really:

“Father I forgive those that have hurt me. I do not understand why this has happened to me, but I trust enough to give it to you. I release myself from the bitterness that comes from hatred and resentment.”

This may be a [“Zugzwang”](#) dilemma for many; a move we would rather not make.

Jesus reminds us today that we are witnesses to his teachings and acts of forgiveness.

Now it is our move- and staying in place is not truly an option.