

Fifth Sunday of Easter  
Cycle A, 2017  
Church of St. Joan of Arc, Marlton NJ  
[John 14:1-12; 1 Peter 2:4-9; Acts 6:1-7)

### *Reject Kingdom*

Let me tell you about Amy Barber. In 1974, Amy Barber was the most beautiful girl in the world. Lucky for me, she went to the same school as I did. It was the ninth grade and I had huge crush on her. Somehow I garnered up the courage to ask her to the big Homecoming Dance. To be clever and creative I wrote her a poem. It went like this:

"O Amy, O Amy,  
would you take it unkind,  
for me to sit by you  
and tell you my mind?  
For my mind is to take you  
to the Homecoming Dance,  
and if you say "no,"  
I'll kick you in the pants!"

She said "no."

I was devastated, naturally. Crushed I went home. My mother was ironing clothes in the basement. She knew immediately that something was wrong. After only a little coaxing, I told her, "Amy Barber said 'no.'" My mother

looked at me and said, "Well, there must be something wrong with her."

With those words she picked me right up, she encouraged me, she told me I was loved and that there was absolutely nothing to be afraid of.

I hear Jesus doing something very similar for the disciples in our passage from John's Gospel.

Jesus spoke these words the night before he was crucified. The night before he dies he tells his disciples not to be afraid. He encourages them, strengthens them. "Where I am, you will be," he says. "I am preparing a place for you."

It's no wonder many people choose to hear this Gospel at the funeral for a loved one. What comfort – to know that Jesus has prepared a place for our loved ones, for us.

We need not fear the worst that life can throw at us.

One of the worst things that can happen to any of us is rejection.

There are many ways that can happen: when we don't make the team or don't get a part in the

play ... when we don't get into the college we had hoped ... when we don't get hired ... or when we lose a job ... when someone turns against us ... when someone we love stops loving us.

When we are rejected it feels as if we are not good enough ... or worse, like we don't matter. When I was a kid we would even call other kids "rejects."

Feeling like a "reject" can get us pretty down ... down on others, down on life, down on God, and mostly down on God.

That's when we need to look at the life of Jesus. Who was rejected more than him? From his birth, when there was no room in the inn, to his death, when he was betrayed and abandoned by his friends – Jesus knows the pain of rejection.

Did you hear what St. Peter calls him, in our second reading? "A living stone, rejected by human beings, but chosen and precious in the sight of God."

Don't let your hearts be troubled! *You* are chosen and precious in the sight of God. God loves you and will never reject you. In fact, it's just the opposite. God has a

special job for you. As a disciple of Jesus, as part of the Body of Christ on earth, you are empowered to continue the mission of Jesus Christ.

How do we do it? By rejecting no one. By seeking out those rejected and befriending them. By loving them the way God loves us.

From the earliest days of the Church, this is what the followers of Christ did. That's how the whole "deacon thing" got started ... so the "rejected" could be served.

When a new kid came into our class in the fourth grade, everyone made fun of him. He talked funny and looked funny. No one played with him at recess. "Be his friend," my mother told me.

That's what we do when we love Jesus. His way, his truth, his life, must become ours.